SERMONS

ON

SEVERAL SUBJECTS,

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ERRATA.

Page 50. Note n. In the Hebrew Quotation the Word כולה should be placed last.

—— 52, Note p. for *jatereris* read *fateretis*

—— ib. For *signum* read *tignum*

—— ib. For *Declan.* read *Declam.*

—— 65. In the Text, for *accordingly* read *according*

—— 263, Note *, for *NS.* read *N.T.*

—— 333, Line 5, for *their* read *there*

—— 405, Line the last, for *not from* read *from not*



SERMON I.

HAGGAI, i. 5.

Now therefore thus saith the Lord of Hosts, Consider your Ways.

THE Faculty of reviewing our past Lives and the present State of our Hearts, in order to approve what is right, or condemn what is wrong in either, carries with it an evident Obligation upon all Men, to exercise it constantly and uprightly. It is a Principle, that implies in its very Nature an Authority over the whole of our Conduct: and we every one feel ourselves most intimately bound to obey its Dictates. Even when we doubt in particular how we are to act, we must know in general, that we are to act as Truth and Conscience direct. And not to examine, what they direct, or whether we are following it, is transgressing the first fundamental Law of moral Agents. So that in-

deed God our Maker saith to each of us continually, by the inward Voice of our own Breasts, *Consider your Ways.* A Precept universally acknowledged, and highly honoured even by Heathens: but peculiarly inforced on Christians, as it is not only often and solemnly enjoined in Scripture, but, to secure all possible Regard to it, Self-examination is incorporated into the most sacred Rite of our holy Religion, (Participation of the blessed Sacrament,) as its vast Importance well deserved.

For in the Midst of so many Passions and Appetites, as compose our Frame; so many Disorders in it, as we are born with; so many more, as we have superadded; such powerful Temptations, as surround us on every Side; we cannot hope, that the carefullest Attention to ourselves will keep us intirely free from Faults: but without such Care, we shall fall into many more and worse; we shall go much greater Lengths in them; we shall continue the wrong Conduct we have once begun, blind to its Guilt and Peril, or only quit one Error to adopt another; till we fix ourselves down in a confirmed State of Sin and Misery. By a little neglect of Culture, a Soil, so fruitful of ill Weeds, will soon be covered with them:

besides

besides that the best Inclinations of the best Minds, if left to themselves, will run wild and degenerate. And proportionably as Persons are more exempted from the free Admonition of others, the more certainly and dangerously they must err, unless preserved by a most vigorous Use of their own Self-reflexions.

A Duty, thus plain and thus necessary, God will doubtless expect us to perform very faithfully. And what the Almighty commands, we shall always find it our Interest to do, never to omit. When we have acted amiss indeed, we must feel Pain in thinking of it. But it is Pain in order to a Cure, which Health and Ease will follow: whereas the Cowardice of not searching our Wounds will inevitably make them fatal. In some of the most trifling Affairs of Life, we should think it strangely absurd, not to observe, what we were doing. But how vastly more is it so, in the Management of the whole of Life; on which our Happiness or Misery depends, in Time and to Eternity!

We cannot bear perhaps to be so serious. But if we refuse it, sooner or later we shall assuredly be driven to it. And never have there been in the World poor Creatures so

dreadfully serious, as they, who have resolved to be always gay and thoughtless. Terrors of Mind, Pains of Body, Perplexity of Affairs have come to be their hourly Companions; till very often Life itself hath grown insupportable to them; and they have desperately broken out of it, and even that in vain. Here or hereafter every one must think: will we then do it, while it may avail us; or when it can only aggravate our Sufferings? Besides, Persons of the greatest Levity are serious in some Points: as earnest, as they are capable of being, about Matters that very little deserve it: and why not about the one thing needful?

But possibly we are not convinced that our Behaviour is of such infinite and eternal Importance. However, at least it is of Importance to examine, whether it be or not. That Inquiry can do us no harm: and it may do us good beyond conception.

But perhaps we have inquired, and think there is Reason to doubt of what we are commonly taught concerning these Matters. But when did we begin to think so? Was it before we had grossly sinned; or however, were pretty much resolved to sin, and wanted to be made easy in it? Or was it not in consequence

of

of imagining, that an Infidel Way of thinking would give us a diſtinguiſhed and faſhionable air? If ſo, what Chance was there, that our Inquiry ſhould be a fair one? It is not picking up from others, or inventing ourſelves a few Jeſts and Cavils, or even real Objections againſt Religion, that intitles us to ſay we have examined it: but an impartial thorough Search into every Thing, within our Reach, favourable to it, as well as contrary. What Authors then have we read, with what Men of Learning and Abilities have we converſed, on the religious Side of the Queſtion? And with what Sort of Spirit have we done it? We have been caught, it may be, with ſomewhat, that appears ludicrous. But may not every Thing almoſt be made to appear ſo to a light Mind? We have been ſhocked perhaps by more ſolid Difficulties. But are there not ſuch in all Parts of Knowledge? Are there not much greater, in what Infidels believe, than what Chriſtians believe? Whoever looks cloſely into the Matter, will find that their Credulity beyond Compariſon exceeds ours. Or ſuppoſing, after ſome honeſt Inquiry, we ſtill doubt: have we not often doubted long, of what at laſt we found true? Would we tamely give up our

Title to an Eſtate, or an Honour, becauſe a few Suſpicions were ſtarted about it, that we could not immediately confute? And doth not our whole Title, to no leſs than eternal Felicity, ſtand and fall with our Religion?

But further: what do we doubt of? Not ſurely of all the Articles of Faith, and all the Obligations of Life. Have we then conſidered well, what the undoubted Ones are, and how far they ought to influence our Conduct? Whenever we do, we ſhall certainly find, that no one Part of it can ſafely be vicious: and indeed, that there is not the leaſt firm Ground to ſtand on, between uniform Piety and Morals, and uniform Profligateneſs and Villainy. If God and Virtue are Realities, we are bound to every Thing which they require in every Caſe. If they are not, we are bound to nothing in any Caſe. Whoever then is ſhocked at the latter Suppoſition, muſt take Refuge in the former: and conſequently ſee it his Duty, to weigh all his Behaviour deliberately and impartially.

We find it but too eaſy, if we will, to judge very favourably of almoſt the worſt Actions we have ever done. At leaſt, between diſguiſing them with falſe Colours, and hurrying on to

do

do and think of ſomewhat elſe, we can for the moſt part quiet, if not applaud ourſelves: eſpecially if others, above all, others of our own Rank, are guilty of them without ſcruple. And even Sins, that we thought heinous ones, when they were juſt committed, after ſome time we grow to imagine ſcarce worth Notice: as if Diſtance leſſened the Reality of Objects, as well as the Appearance. But God ſees every Thing in its true Light and Magnitude: and ſurely then it is our Concern to ſee it ſo too. For what can it avail us, to imagine pleaſing Falſehoods, when we are to ſtand ſo ſoon, indeed ſtand always, before a Judge, who diſcerns the very Bottom of our Souls, and to whom a thouſand Years are but as one Day?

Have we then examined, as in his Preſence, our Lives and Hearts? And by what Standard have we tried their Innocence or Guilt? The Practice of others can no more juſtify Us, than ours can Them. Mere Fancy and Inclination is no Rule at all. And Reaſon, if biaſſed, is next to none. Have we then really done our utmoſt to diveſt it of Self-partiality, to enlighten it by the Inſtruction of pious and judicious Friends and Books; and, above all, to direct it by the unerring Word of God?

The written Laws of that, cannot be moulded into what we pleaſe, like the variable Arguings of our own Minds: but will unmoveably oppoſe our moſt darling Paſſions, if they be wrong. And ſince our final State muſt be judged by it, ſurely our preſent ought too.

If then there be any Perſons, (and God grant there be not many here!) who have never duly obeyed his great Command of conſidering their Ways: *To-day, if ye will hear his Voice, harden not your Hearts*[a]. To-morrow may be quite too late: and at beſt every Delay will make Self-inſpection more painful, and our Condition more hopeleſs. But how carefully ſoever we may have ſearched into our Breaſts already, freſh Occaſions for it will be daily riſing; and unleſs the Repetition of it be frequent, we ſhall perform it ineffectually, and very ſoon leave it off intirely. The preſent Seaſon indeed is a yearly Memorial of Recollection and Serioufneſs. But as the mere outward Shew of it is of no Value; ſo the more real Goodneſs of a few Weeks, if it end with them, is of very little. Our Buſineſs therefore is, ſo to examine ourſelves now, as to live more Chriſtianly ever after. And whence can

[a] Pſalm xcv. 8.

we

we better begin, than from what we owe to Him, that made us?

Do we then often think of him, and constantly reverence him, as the wise and good, the just and powerful, Ruler of the World? Do we praise him for his Mercies, pray for his Pardon, Protection and Grace, not only now and then in public Form, but daily in private, with a deep and awful Sense of what we say before him? Or can we perhaps some of us remember when we prayed in secret and in earnest last? If not, why this Neglect of the Author of all we enjoy, the Disposer of all we hope for? Can we think it Meanness to honour him, even with the lowest Submission? Do we think it Meanness in our Inferiors to pay due Respect to us? If not, why in us to pay all Respect to God? Will we then at least do it for the future? Resolving otherwise deliberately, comes very little short of renouncing and defying him; and dare we then go thus far? What would it deserve were we to treat an earthly Superior so? What doth it deserve, if we treat the Lord and King of all so?

But besides Worship, we owe him further, Faith in what he teaches, Obedience to what he commands. Have we then inquired with Humility

Humility of Heart, what Doctrines he hath propofed to our Belief, what Laws he hath prefcribed to our Conduct, by Reafon or Revelation? Or do we fet up our own Fancy and Caprice for abfolute Judges of his Declarations and Appointments: indolently and fecurely determining, that this Article of Faith or Rule of Life, be its Evidence what it will, cannot come from him; and another, though it doth, ought however to give Way to our private Intereft, Eafe or Humour? Could fuch Treatment of human Laws be born? And will the Almighty and All-wife bear it? *Be not deceived: God is not mocked.*

But, how fully foever we own the Authority of Religion, do we practife it? What is our great Aim and Endeavour here? Is it to fecure a happy Immortality? Or to grafp as many, as we can, of the fplendid Bubbles of this momentary Scene? To get a little more Power, or Wealth, or Rank, and then, with unabated Thirft, a little more ftill; even to the very Night, that our Souls fhall be required of us? Whom do we think happy? The virtuous, the humble, the good? Or the artful, the profperous, the great? What do we rejoice in, or grieve at? Is it for our Proficiency or Failure, in

Love

Love and Duty to God, in Reaſonableneſs of Heart, Uprightneſs of Behaviour, Diſengagement from this trifling World? Are theſe the Things we are concerned about? Or a very different Sort of Advantages and Pre-eminences, belonging to the preſent State of Things intirely, and many of them quite contemptible, even were no other to follow? When our Duty and our Intereſt thwart each other, how do we act? Honeſtly and cheerfully give up the latter? Or frame poor Excuſes for preferring it, or unfair Contrivances for reconciling it, to the former? Theſe are Queſtions of the laſt Importance. For if the *Love of the World* be our reigning Paſſion, *the Love of the Father is not in us*[b]. Which do we chuſe then, Earth or Heaven? Let us not cheat ourſelves, but ſpeak it out to our own Hearts.

Or, however free in this Reſpect, do we live to no other Paſſion, equally unworthy? Is not our principal View to be admired for ſome Accompliſhment, or applauded for ſome Ability, of very little Merit? And are we not led both into Follies and Sins, to obtain and increaſe a falſe Kind of Eſteem from others,

[b] 1 John ii. 15.

that

that will only tempt us to forget ourselves? Do we attentively distinguish, what is truly of Value, and to what Degree? In how many Things of Consequence we are deficient, in how few we excel? And *who hath made us to differ*[c] from the very meanest of our Fellow-creatures? Are we willing, if need require, to be slighted and despised, hated and reproached, for the Sake of acting as we ought? Or do we *love the Praise of Men*[d], and *seek not the Honour that cometh from God only*[e]?

But, supposing we are clear both of Worldliness and Vanity, still what can we answer with respect to Pleasure? Do we indulge none, that is condemned by impartial Reason; or, what we are sure is impartial, the Word of God? Every forbidden Way of gratifying sensual Desires, visibly produces many and dreadful Mischiefs and Crimes. Excess and Intemperance ruin the Healths, the Understandings, the Usefulness, the Fortunes, the Families of Men. Breach of Chastity produces all the same Evils, and extends them further: brings innocent Persons into Guilt and Dishonour, under treacherous Pretences of Esteem and Love; involves their innocent Friends in Dis-

[c] 1 Cor. iv. 7. [d] John xii 43. [e] John v. 44.

tress

treſs and Shame along with them, and occaſions innumerable Evils, private and public. But particularly Breach of the Marriage Vow, diſſolves the very Bonds of human Society. For if Faith and Truth, ſolemnly given, oblige not, oblige not both Sexes, in this Caſe, why do they in any other? Are we then innocent, in theſe Reſpects; or have we repented; or do we deſpiſe the Threatening, that *they, who do ſuch Things, ſhall not inherit the Kingdom of God*[f]?

And, in regard to other Indulgences, have we acted as becomes rational Natures, deſigned to prepare ourſelves, by the Diſcipline of this Life, for ſpiritual Happineſs in a better? Do we guard with Care, againſt ſinking into Delicacy and Indolence, againſt being diſſipated amidſt a Hurry of Gayeties, or loſt in polite Amuſements and elegant Trifles; or are we *Lovers of Pleaſures more than Lovers of God*[g]? What Proportion of our Income do we ſpend in Deeds of Piety, Charity and proper Beneficence? What Proportion of our Time, in the religious and moral Improvement of our Hearts, and the real Duties of our reſpective Stations? All the Wealth we have, and every Hour we

[f] Gal. v. 21. [g] 2 Tim. iii. 4.

live, we muſt account for. Can we do it with Joy? Can we ſay we have been hitherto *work-ing, while it was Day, the Works of him that ſent us*[h]? If not, will we now reflect, how faſt the Night approaches?

Another, very material, Head of Examination, is that of our Reſentments. Do we bear Ill-will to no one, for excelling or coming too near us in Rank, in Power, in Favour, in Fortune, in Qualifications of Body or Mind? Are we offended at no one, for doing what he juſtly might, perhaps what he ought; or, at leaſt, apprehended himſelf bound to? Have we inquired, with Diligence and Candour, into the Truth and Motives of the Fact we are diſpleaſed with, and in Effect heard both Sides? Do we make all fit Allowances for the Merit, for the Repentance of the offending Party, for human Infirmity in general? Do we never puniſh, but when it is plainly needful: and never then, but by lawful Means, and in a proper Degree; never accuſe, but when we have evident Reaſon; and always confine ourſelves in doing it to the *Words of Truth and Soberneſs*[i]? We have been guilty ourſelves of many and

[h] John ix. 4.

[i] Acts xxvi. 25.

great Faults, both againſt God and Man; do we forgive, as we hope to be forgiven?

A further Inquiry yet muſt be, (an extremely comprehenſive and intereſting one) What is the Tendency of our common Diſcourſe and Converſation? Is it favourable to Religion, to Probity, to Decency, to Good-will among Men, or the contrary? Doth it expreſs Diſlike of Wickedneſs and Folly, though countenanced by Faſhion; or Excuſe, if not Approbation, of whatever chances to be in Vogue? Doth it ſhew, that *in our Eyes a vile Perſon is contemned, but we honour them that fear the Lord*[k]? or do we love to palliate the Sins of the former, and aggravate the Failures of the latter? Have we indeed ever thought of Rules on this Subject? Or ſaid, *Our Lips are our own, Who is Lord over us*[l]? Yet licentious Talk, of every Kind, doth unſpeakable Miſchief. We all complain of it, when we ſuffer by it. And when other Perſons, when Society, when the Honour of God, when Piety and Virtue, ſuffer by it; there is evidently the ſame, there is often far greater, Guilt in it. And, ſince our Hearts are as much concerned in what we ſay, as what we do; the Declaration is perfectly reaſonable:

[k] Pſ. xv. 4. [l] Pſ. xii. 4.

By

By thy Words thou ſhalt be juſtified, and by thy Words thou ſhalt be condemned[m]. Which then ſhall *we* be?

But our Behaviour muſt be recollected, not only towards our Fellow-creatures in general, but with a cloſer View to the more particular Relations of Life. If married Perſons, are we faithful, affectionate, conſiderate, mild, prudent? If Children, do we make thankful Returns for the Care and Tenderneſs of our Parents; obey them dutifully; and pay them all that Honour, which we ſhall certainly expect hereafter to be paid us? If Parents, do we preſerve towards our Children a proper Temperature of Authority and Condeſcenſion, and watch over and provide for thoſe, to whom we have given Being, ſo as may beſt ſecure their true Happineſs, and our own Comfort in them, now and at the great Day? If Heads of Families, have we due Regard to the preſent and eternal Good of thoſe whom we take under our Roof; remembering, that we alſo have a Maſter in Heaven? If Servants, do we behave with Singleneſs of Heart, ſhewing all Fidelity, as unto the Lord, and not to Men? As Subjects, do we expreſs, in Word and Deed, the

[m] Matth. xii. 37.

Reverence and the Gratitude we owe, to those whom Providence hath put in Authority over us? Whether our Condition be private or public, do we act in it, unbiassed, to the utmost of our Knowledge, by Interest, Prejudice, and partial Affection? If employed in Affairs, are we vigilant and upright, and studious, in all Things, of the general Good, as Men *fearing God, and hating Covetousness*[n]? If advanced to Stations of Eminence and Power, do we countenance Religion, Virtue, Merit; and discourage the worthless and profligate? Or only wonder the World is so bad, when we have contributed to make it so: or conclude it can never be good, when indeed we have tried no Means to reform it?

Further, in this Situation, are we careful, what Sort of Example we set others to copy after? And sufficiently apprehensive, (for we can hardly be too much,) that not only our Sins, but our Imprudences, Actions that are imprudent only as they endanger others, may produce an incredible deal of Evil in those around us and beneath us; whereas God expects all Persons to be his Ministers for good, in Proportion to the Abilities and Opportunities, with which he hath intrusted them.

[n] Exod. xviii. 21.

Nor ſhould we ſtop at conſidering, what our Faults have been: that alone would be a Speculation of little Uſe: but proceed to think what muſt follow from them. Indeed, have we not already ſome of us found our Characters, our Fortunes, our Healths, impaired by them? Or at leaſt will they not of Neceſſity in a little Time? Hath not the Happineſs, we promiſed ourſelves from our Tranſgreſſions, proved very inſignificant, or very ſhort-lived? Have they not often brought upon us dreadful Anguiſh and Diſtreſs; and ſometimes forced us into moſt deſtructive Methods of trying to get rid of the Torment of Thought? Or, how joyfully ſoever we go on at preſent: yet the further we go, muſt not our Return be more difficult; and unleſs we return, our End more deplorable? Nay indeed, will not the leſs blameable, the allowable Indulgences of this World, if we purſue them eagerly, and live chiefly to them, exclude or wear out from our Souls, thoſe Impreſſions of and Attentions to ſerious Piety, which alone will bring us Peace in our laſt Hour? We can affect, it may be, to talk of Death with much Indifference; but have we in earneſt brought it near to us, and conſidered what it is? An immediate Paſ-

ſage,

ſage, without Recall, into that State, where ſmall and great ſhall ſtand before God: who, as ſurely as he governs the World with Juſtice and Wiſdom, *will bring every Work into Judgment, with every ſecret Thing, whether it be good, or whether it be evil*°, and recompenſe us all according to our Uſe of every Talent committed to us. Are we then prepared againſt that Day? Ready for the Searcher of Hearts, were he to call us now to our final Account? If not: do we reflect, how ſoon we may be called, how ſoon we muſt, and what the Conſequences will be for ever? Do we then at length reſolve, againſt all Sin, all Occaſions of Sin, all Supineneſs and Negligence from this Time forwards? Are we unfeignedly ſorry, that we have reſolved it no ſooner? Are we deeply ſenſible, that, in all we have done amiſs, we have provoked a moſt holy God; and have no Claim to Pardon, much leſs to Happineſs hereafter, but through the Mercy, procured by our bleſſed Redeemer? And will we accordingly fly to Him alone, with an humble Faith in the Atonement of his Death, and the Efficacy of his Grace: or boldly hazard all, on the Sufficiency of our own Strength, which

° Eccl. xii. 14.

hath deceived us so often, and the imagined Merits of our own Righteousness, or our own Repentance, imperfect and defective as they both are?

Think not any of these, harsh and ill-natured Questions: they are the very friendliest, that can be proposed. Think them not gloomy and melancholy Inquiries: they are the Groundwork of all true Comfort. No one indeed hath a Right to require an Answer to them from another: but God hath full Right to command, as he doth, by his Word and the Preachers of it, that every one put them home to his own Soul. They carry still more Terror to those, who are bound by their Office to utter them, than to those who sit and hear them: but Terror inexpressible to all, who provide not to answer them well; and Joy inexpressible to all, that do. *Let us* therefore conscientiously *search and try our Ways, and turn unto the Lord our God*[p]. Let us beg of him fervently, to shew us what Manner of Persons we have been, are, and ought to be; and say to him, in the Words, which he himself hath dictated, *Who can tell how oft he*

[p] Lament. iii. 40.

offendeth?

offendeth? O cleanse thou me, from my secret Faults[q]. *Try me, O God, and seek the Ground of my Heart: prove me, and examine my Thoughts. Look well, if there be any Way of Wickedness in me, and lead me in the Way everlasting*[r].

[q] Ps. xix. 12. [r] Ps. cxxxix. 23, 24.



SERMON II.

2 COR. v. 21.

For he hath made him to be Sin for us, who knew no Sin; that we might be made the Righteousness of God in him.

THESE Words contain that great Article of the Christian Faith, that the Death of our blessed Saviour hath obtained for us Pardon, Grace and everlasting Life: which important Truth is so strangely disregarded, even by many, who call themselves his Disciples, that I think it necessary

I. To confute the Prejudices, that lead Men to think slightly of their Need of the Satisfaction, which he made on our Behalf: before I proceed

II. To explain and defend this Part of the Christian Doctrine.

I. Our Condition with respect to God is infinitely the most important of all our Con-

cerns; for we are abſolutely in his Power alone: and the Forgiveneſs of our Sins is the moſt important Article in that Condition. Were we innocent Creatures, we could only doubt, what Happineſs we had to hope for from Him: and about that we might be, though not indifferent, yet free from Anxiety. But as we are all guilty, the firſt Queſtion, and a very alarming one, is, what Puniſhment we have to fear? Thoughtleſsneſs and Partiality may indeed diſpoſe us to imagine, that however right in Speculation the Laws of Religion and Virtue may be, yet in Practice great Allowance is due to Inclination; this being as truly Part of our Nature, as Reaſon. And when Perſons find many others that ſeem to judge in the ſame Manner, (eſpecially if ſome of them be of that Rank, which is admitted in moſt Things to ſet the Pattern;) then, in Companies together they can go almoſt any Lengths: decide in a Moment, that this is Superſtition, and that Preciſeneſs; that ſuch Reſtraints are abſurd, ſuch others unneceſſary; and take Fancy and Faſhion, mixed together as it happens, for the only Rules of Life; without a ſingle Reflexion whether they are acting, as they ought; or the leaſt Apprehenſion, that, if they are not, any

Harm will follow, provided they guard against a few present Inconveniences. Yet many of these perhaps are People of Conscience in some Things: but in others, they despise all mention of it: and for the most Part, if they behave tolerably well to their Fellow-creatures, have scarce the Notion of any Duty they owe to their Creator: at least beyond the mere Propriety of attending his Worship now and then, in Compliance with a Custom, that is not yet quite worn out.

Now would but such Men venture on a very safe Thing, a little serious Thought; they would soon perceive, that, though Inclination is a Part of our Nature, yet every Inclination must not be gratified; for this would be mischievous both to all around us, and to ourselves: that therefore we ought to have some Rule, which to indulge, and which to restrain: that Fancy and Fashion can never be the Rule; for both are continually varying, and would often lead us to Dishonour and Ruin: that we have within us a natural Sense of Right and Wrong, which passes Judgement with Authority on our Actions, frequently whether we will or not; and that, if it be in many Cases obscure and weak, our Business is to improve and strengthen

ſtrengthen it: that the great and wiſe Being, who hath made us and all Things, muſt intend we ſhould behave ſuitably to this Conſciouſneſs, which he hath given us; and obey whatever Commands he may think fit to ſuperadd: that both his Holineſs and his Goodneſs oblige him, as the Sovereign of the World, to preſerve due Order amongſt his Subjects, by recompenſing them as they deſerve: for that ſome Actions deſerve well, and ſome ill, we every one of us inwardly feel.

Yet we are very apt to perſuade ourſelves, that it is beneath him to look ſo low, as the Paſſions and Follies of ſuch inconſiderable Creatures as we are. But I intreat you to conſider: Is there, upon Earth, that creeping Thing, that Weed, that ſmalleſt Particle of dead Matter, which God hath not formed with inexpreſſible Wiſdom, and doth not govern by ſtated Laws, which have all their Force from the never-ceaſing Exertion of his Power? And how can we doubt then of his governing the rational, that is, the nobleſt Part of his Creatures, by Laws equally adapted to them: by Precepts, Rewards, Puniſhments? What is there worthy of him to do, if this be not? But indeed, he hath both aſſured us of his doing

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it, and we experience that he doth it. We perceive his Injunctions and Prohibitions within us: we pass his Sentence on ourselves, when we do amiss: we undergo Corrections of his Appointment, when we suffer for what we have done: and by these Specimens of his Justice now, he warns us of the full Execution of it hereafter. For if Wickedness escape, and finally triumph, in one single Instance, then is God no longer infinitely perfect, but partial or impotent, like one of us. Earthly Princes confine their Care to the most important Points, because attending to every Point is, not below them, but above them. The nearer they can approach towards it, the livelier Images they are of him, who *humbleth himself to behold the Things that are in Heaven and Earth*[a], and who *numbereth the Hairs of our Heads*[b], and weighs every Thought of our Hearts. Let not good Persons be terrified at this: for *he knows whereof we are made, and is merciful to them that fear him*[c]. But let the Inconsiderate, the Rash and the Bold, learn from it, both to be cautious how they act, and to recollect how they have acted. We seem very commonly to think that the Sins of our former

[a] Ps. cxiii. 5, 6. [b] Matth. x. 30. [c] Ps. ciii. 13, 14.

Days,

Days, loſe their Guilt in Proportion to their Diſtance; and are gradually annihilated, as the Impreſſion of them wears out of our Minds. But with God what is paſt is not gone. On the contrary, unleſs we intitle ourſelves duly to Forgiveneſs, it remains on Record an indelible Evidence, againſt that Day, when *the Books ſhall be opened, and the Dead be judged out of the Things which are written in them*[d].

It greatly concerns us therefore to look back on all our Faults, that we may ſee diſtinctly, what our true Condition is. Probably enough, on a ſuperficial Inquiry, the Verdict may be highly to our Advantage. But our Buſineſs is to make a thorough Search and know the Reality: by placing before our Thoughts, (after compoſing them into a ſerious Temper,) firſt the ſeveral Rules of a godly, righteous and ſober Life, made known to us by Reaſon and Scripture; then our own Conduct under each Head. Whoever hath not examined thus, has need to begin immediately: and whoever hath, will have need to repeat his Work frequently from Time to Time. But the preſent Seaſon is peculiarly appropriated to pious Recollection. If therefore we contrive Methods of running away

[d] Rev. xx. 12.

from

from it now, we too plainly ſignify our Intention of neglecting it for ever: and if thoſe Contrivances be public and profeſſed ones, we offend againſt common Decency, as well as Religion.

In the Performance of this Duty, we ought by no Means to accuſe ourſelves falſely: but it would be a fatal Miſtake to flatter ourſelves: to overlook or extenuate the Faults we have committed, or fancy, that be they ever ſo bad, we could not help it, and others have done worſe; and nothing remains, but to be eaſy about the Matter. How many ſoever have done amiſs, they ſhall all account for their Doings: for Numbers of Criminals can never change Wrong into Right; and judging the World is no harder to God, than condemning a ſingle Perſon. He hath notified his Will to us all, by the Light of our own Conſciences, by the Revelation of his holy Word, by the Inſtructions of other religious Books, by the private Admonitions of our Friends, by the public Warnings of his Miniſters. He hath given us much more Strength to perform our Duty, than we uſe: he is ready, on our humble Requeſt, to add to it as much as we want. And in theſe Circumſtances it can never be a

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ſlight Matter, if, in any one Inſtance, we have been diſobedient or negligent towards him; have unjuſtly hurt or diſregarded any of his Creatures, our Brethren; have corrupted or debaſed our own Natures; and behaved unſuitably to the Condition in which he hath placed us, or the ſpiritual Bliſs for which he hath deſigned us.

We are ſtrangely diſpoſed to conſider ſome Tranſgreſſions, as being Subjects of Mirth only. But in Truth every Departure from the Rule of Right, and the Commands of our Maker, is a Thing of great Moment: and what we are pleaſed to imagine trifling, were it not for Cuſtom and Self-partiality, we ſhould ſee to be of great Conſequence. We are alſo extremely apt to think our Faults more important in almoſt every other View, than as they offend God. And yet the direct contrary is one of the plaineſt Truths, that can be. For as all we enjoy proceeds from him; as our Happineſs or Miſery depends intirely upon him; and every bad Thing we do, (whomſoever elſe it may injure or not,) is always injurious to his Authority, and hateful to his holy Nature; he is evidently beyond all Compariſon the Perſon, whom we are continually to have moſt in our Thoughts,

Thoughts, whoſe Favour we ſhould chiefly deſire, whoſe Diſpleaſure we ſhould chiefly dread. If therefore we have acted amiſs, (and who hath not, in more and greater Points, than he is willing to allow?) barely acting otherwiſe, without Regard to God as intereſted in the Caſe, can never be enough. Till we feel a deep Senſe in our Hearts of the Unworthineſs of our Behaviour towards him, we are far from becoming inwardly what we ought: and unleſs we keep alive and ſtrengthen that Senſe, by humbly and frequently expreſſing it to him, with earneſt Deſires of his Pardon and Grace, and hearty Endeavours of Amendment, we neglect the Methods of Reconciliation and Recovery, which Reaſon itſelf points out to us.

There are ſo few brought thus far in Religion, that very poſſibly the firſt natural Thought of a great Part of them may be, that nothing farther can be wanting to procure them Forgiveneſs and future Happineſs. And it is very true, that we can do no more, not ſo much indeed, without the divine Interpoſition. But it by no Means follows, that this will be enough, even to ſave us from Puniſhment, much leſs to obtain us Reward; and leaſt of all the unſpeakable Reward of everlaſting Life.

As the Laws of God are juſt, he may juſtly inflict the Penalties of them on Tranſgreſſors: As he is the moral Governor of the Univerſe, he muſt ſupport the Honour of his Government throughout his Creation. Human Government can never be ſupported, without making a great Difference, in many Caſes, between penitent Perſons and innocent Ones. Whether the Divine can or not, we none of us know: for the Extent of it is boundleſs, and we are acquainted but very imperfectly with ſo much as our own ſmall Part. Even in this, we ſee, that by the Conſtitution of Things, which God hath appointed, Repentance often avails not at all, and often very imperfectly, to prevent the bad Effects, in this World, of our Faults and Follies. And how ſhall we be ſure, that the ſame Kind of Rules, which we experience to take Place here, may not alſo take Place hereafter? Whatever therefore God ſhall reveal to us concerning theſe Matters, we ought to receive with implicit Reverence: and uſe with the utmoſt Thankfulneſs any Method, which he ſhall inform us is neceſſary, or expedient, in order to avoid the ill Conſequences of our Sins, though poſſibly we perceive no Manner of Connexion between the Remedy

and the Cure. Nor ſhall we in ſo doing pay any greater Regard to the All-wiſe God, (tho' unſpeakably greater is his Due,) than we pay continually, and ſhould be inexcuſable if we did not, to our poor ignorant Fellow-creatures, whom we truſt, full *as* implicitly, with our Fortunes, our Healths and our Lives.

What then hath God taught us concerning our Caſe? That neither ſuch Repentance, nor ſuch Reformation, as we are capable of, will ſuffice to obtain us Forgiveneſs and eternal Happineſs. For he hath ordained farther Means for theſe Ends: and he certainly would not without Cauſe; eſpecially ſuch extraordinary Means, as thoſe in the Text: which I have purpoſely deferred to mention, till having ſhewn you, that Pardon is the great Thing we all want, and cannot of ourſelves ſecure, I might diſpoſe you to embrace with a more joyful Faith that reviving Aſſurance, that *Him who knew no Sin, God hath made to be Sin for us, that we might become the Righteouſneſs of God in Him.* And this Doctrine I now proceed

II. To explain and defend.

The natural and obvious Meaning of theſe Words, interpreted jointly with innumerable

other Passages of Scripture, is; that our gracious Maker, being desirous perfectly to relieve Mankind both from the Original bad Effects of the Fall of our first Parents, and the personal Guilt of our own Transgressions; but perceiving, in his unsearchable Wisdom, sufficient Reasons not to do it on such Confessions and Submissions only, as we were able to make, appointed, that his ever-blessed Son, (who voluntarily condescended to engage in the merciful Work) should take upon Him the likeness of sinful Flesh; and bear, for our Sakes, Inconveniences and Sufferings, from which otherwise the Dignity and the Purity of his Nature intirely exempted him; that he took upon him the Form of Man, not only in order to teach the Doctrines and exemplify the Practice of true Religion, which Men had almost forgotten; but also to undergo that painful and ignominious Death, which he foresaw wicked Persons, offended by his Reproofs, would inflict on him: that this Consent of His *to be made Sin for us*, to be crucified as a Malefactor on our Account, foreknown from Eternity, our heavenly Father hath been pleased to consider, as a Sin-offering made to himself: an Acknowledgement, on our Behalf, of the Ill-desert of

Disobedience; a Satisfaction, in our Stead, to the Honour of his Justice; and an Inducement to bestow on all, who shall qualify themselves for receiving it, such full Pardon, as else they could never have had. Thus by *making Him to be Sin for Them, He makes Them the Righteousness of God through Him*; that is, on Account of Christ's yielding to be treated as a Criminal, He treats Them as no longer Criminals; giving them joyful Proofs here of his protecting Providence and sanctifying Grace; and raising them up hereafter from the universal Sentence of Death to the blessed Enjoyment of eternal Life.

This is so evidently the Tenour of the whole New Testament, that no one could ever have entertained the least Doubt on the Subject, but for the seeming Difficulty of reconciling some Part or other of it to his own Apprehensions and Notions: which surely, in a Matter so far above our Reach, we have little Cause to trust to, against the express Declarations of Him, who knows all Things. It implies no Absurdity in the least. Guilty Persons cannot claim Forgiveness, nor innocent Persons everlasting Happiness, as Matter of Right, but of Mercy and Favour only.

Now God is not leſs merciful and favourable to his Creatures, if he provides on Purpoſe a particular Method for beſtowing theſe Bleſſings on them, than if he did it without ſuch a Proviſion. Nay indeed, more Mercy is ſhewn in making ſuch a Proviſion when it is wanted, than could be ſhewn, were the Caſe better. The Goodneſs of God appears eminently, in propoſing and accepting, what nothing but Goodneſs could induce him to propoſe and accept: the Goodneſs of our bleſſed Lord appears equally, in executing the gracious Deſign by ſuch Condeſcenſions, as we read in the Goſpels, particularly of this Week: and the Goodneſs of the Divine Spirit, in applying the Whole, by his inward Operations, for the Benefit of our Souls. That one Perſon ſhould undergo Pains and Hardſhips for the Sake of others, and a good Perſon ſuffer many Things to prevent the Miſery and promote the Happineſs of bad ones, is ſo common in lower Inſtances, that though we could not have expected, we may well believe, this high Degree of God's Love towards us, *that while we were yet Sinners, Chriſt died for us* [a]. We ſee not indeed fully, how his Death produces our Sal-

[a] Rom. v. 8.

vation: nor do many People ever know, how the Steps taken by their Friends for their Pardon or Advancement proved effectual: yet they are not the less effectual on that Account. But thus much however we see daily, that, from Regard to the Services and Sufferings and Intercessions of some Persons, others have Favours done them, very wisely and justly, which else neither Wisdom nor Justice would have permitted. And why then should it not be a fit Recompense to our blessed Lord, (as undoubtedly it must be the most acceptable one possible,) for what he so cheerfully undertook and went through, that Mankind, to whom he had made himself related, in so extraordinary a Manner, with so amiable an Intention, should be treated the more kindly on his Account: that, to speak in the Language of the Prophet [b], *when he had made himself an Offering for Sin, he should see of the Travel of his Soul and be satisfied, by the Knowledge of Himself justifying many?* For observe, no one will ever be accounted righteous for his Sake, who doth not in Fact become righteous by his Means. And rewarding his Incarnation and Death, by putting Sinners into his Hands to be

[b] Isai. liii. 10, 11.

made happy, on Condition that he ſhould firſt make them Holy, Pious and Virtuous, doth no leſs Honour to the Juſtice of God, than to his Mercy.

And how little ſoever we apprehend the Reaſons of what Heaven hath done towards our Deliverance; yet as we muſt perceive the Fitneſs of all that we are to contribute towards it, Repentance, Faith and Obedience, we know very fully as much as we need. They, who never heard of the Interpoſition of Chriſt, may poſſibly receive ſome Benefit from it, on a general Application, that God will be merciful to them in ſuch Manner as he ſhall think proper. But of us will be required an explicit Petition for that Mercy, which he hath offered in that Form, which he hath directed. And if inſtead of this, we will reſt our Cauſe ſolely on the Footing of our own Righteouſneſs, or our own Repentance, imperfect as we know, or eaſily may know, they both are: if we refuſe to acknowledge that Efficacy in the Death of our Bleſſed Saviour, which He and his Apoſtles have aſcribed to it: from what Cauſe ſoever this proceeds, other than excuſable Miſtake; whether from a ſlight Opinion of the Deſert of Sin, from a high Notion of human Virtue, from

from Unwillingneſs to confeſs Obligations, or from the mere Pride of theſe poor ſhallow Underſtandings of ours, claiming to know every Reaſon that God hath for his Actions, while yet we know completely no one Thing around us; it is a preſumptuous Neglect, full of Guilt. And one Motive for making our Salvation dependant on another, and the Manner of his obtaining it for us incomprehenſible to ourſelves, might well be, to check that ſwelling Vanity of our Hearts, which is the Parent of almoſt all our Sin and Miſery, and to teach Man *to walk humbly with his God* [c].

Let us therefore thankfully accept his Mercy, juſt as we find it offered to us, and learn to own, that we *have all ſinned, and come ſhort of the Glory of God, and are juſtified freely by his Grace, through the Redemption, that is in Jeſus Chriſt: whom God hath ſet forth to be a Propitiation, through Faith in his Blood, to declare his Righteouſneſs: that he might be juſt, and the Juſtifier of him which believeth in Jeſus* [d].

[c] Mic. vi. 8. [d] Rom. iii. 23—26.

SERMON III.

JAMES ii. 10.

For whosoever shall keep the whole Law, and yet offend in one Point, he is guilty of all.

FEW Persons, I apprehend, have either read or heard these Words, without being in some degree shocked at them, and looking upon them as *a* very *hard Saying*[a]. For though, from Reverence to Scripture, we may endeavour to keep down what rises in our Minds, yet no wonder if we feel a strong Reluctance to believing, that he, who transgresses in some Things, is guilty of others, in which he doth not transgress; and so by running into one Extreme becomes chargeable with the Opposite:

[a] John vi. 60.

posite: which, it must be owned, this Passage, upon the first View of it, appears to affirm. But then we ought to remember, that in all Discourses, upon all Subjects, many Things occur, which are by no Means to be understood according to the mere Sound of the Words, but according to the Nature of the Matter in Question, the visible Intention of the Writer or Speaker, and the Use of the Language. And more especially short Sentences and Maxims, whether of Religion, Morals, or Prudence, ought to have this Allowance made to them: because they are often purposely conceived in Terms, the obvious Meaning of which alarms Men; that so their Attention may be excited more effectually to that hidden Wisdom, which, on farther Inquiry, it will be found they convey. Now the Assertion before us is a Jewish Maxim, found in several of their ancient Books, written since the Times of the Apostles, and therefore probably enough used before their Time, when a Controversy amongst them, of which we have Footsteps in the Gospels, might easily furnish an Occasion for it.

They had a Law, of which the Precepts, adding the Ceremonial to the Moral, were very

numerous,

numerous. The Obſervation of all theſe, tho' adapted with great Wiſdom to the Circumſtances, in which they were placed for many Ages, was found very burdenſome. And therefore ſome of them had begun to perſuade themſelves, and teach others, that a ſtrict Obedience to whichever Part they pleaſed was ſufficient; or to expreſs it in their own Words, that *God gave ſo many Commandments to them, that by doing any of them, they might be ſaved*[b]: by which they meant at leaſt any great one: and hence in all Likelihood aroſe the Queſtion, *which was the great Commandment in the Law*[c]? A Doctrine of ſo pernicious Conſequence as this, we may be ſure, while there was any Regard to Truth left, would be ſtrenuouſly oppoſed. And it was natural, that the contrary Doctrine ſhould be expreſſed by the Teachers of it in the ſtrongeſt Manner they

[b] Pocock on Hoſ. xiv. 2. from Ikkarim, l. 3. c. 29. In hunc ordinem recipiunt quemvis antiqui, qui ob unicum tantummodo præſtitum præceptum, non rejiciens interim cætera, ſed ea approbans, meretur nomen Iſraelitæ. *Men. ben. Iſr.* de Reſur. l. 2. c. 8. p. 181. But then he ſaith, l. 1. c. 6. p. 43, 44. that the Ancients held, they were firſt to ſuffer for their bad Deeds, then to be rewarded for their good Deeds; but ſtill all Iſraelites were to be finally happy, unleſs they diſbelieved Providence, the Law, or the Reſurrection.

[c] Matth. xxii. 36.

could

could well invent. Now ſuch undoubtedly is that of the Text, which may ſeem indeed to have overdone the Matter not a little. But the Limitations, belonging to it, were probably well underſtood by every Body then. And therefore all that St. *James* needed, in writing to the Jewiſh Chriſtians of thoſe Days, was to confirm it by the Sanction of his Authority; though in our Times it is requiſite to explain, and guard it againſt Miſtakes: which alſo he hath greatly aſſiſted us in doing.

For, that he never deſigned in the leaſt to affirm, that being guilty of one Sin would make Mens Condition as bad, as being guilty of ever ſo many, we may be very ſure; not only from the monſtrous Unreaſonableneſs of ſuch a Notion, and its Inconſiſtence with what the other Parts of Scripture have expreſsly taught; but from hence alſo, that were this the Caſe, all Sinners whatever muſt receive an equal Condemnation; and yet he himſelf, in the very firſt Verſe of the very next Chapter, ſpeaks of ſome, that *ſhall receive a greater Condemnation*. Since therefore this could not be his Meaning, let us proceed

I. To conſider, what it was, or might be.

II. To draw ſuitable Inferences from it.

I. To

I. To consider, what it was, or justly might be.

And here, *offending in one Point* must of Necessity signify offending wilfully: for through Ignorance, Inadvertence, or Surprize, *we all offend in many Things*, as this very Epistle tells us[d]: yet we cannot think, the Text was intended to bring every Person under the Guilt which it mentions. And therefore we are not to understand it of such Offences, but of presumptuous and habitual Sins, that whoever breaks the Law *in one Point is guilty of all*.

Again, offending in one Point, may mean either offending in some one of singular Importance, or in any one, great or small. There have been Persons, who, taking it in the former Sense, have understood the one Point to be that of mutual Love, which St. *James* just before[e], as well as St. *Paul*[f], says, *is the fulfilling of the Law*. And as the whole Law of social Life *is briefly comprehended in this Saying, Thou shalt love thy Neighbour as thyself*[g], he, who offends in that one, will certainly be guilty of all, since all depend on that[h]: and however

[d] James iii. 2. [e] Ver. 8. [f] Rom. xiii. 10. [g] Ver. 9.

[h] Merito fit omnium reus, qui contra illam [Charitatem] facit, ex qua pendent omnia. *Aug. ad Hieron.* See also the Life of St. Erkenwald in the Appendix to Dugdale's History of St. Paul's. P. 8.

ever strictly: the outward Acts of each may be performed, the inward Spirit of them cannot be preserved. But if it be thought rather, that *offending in* any *one Point* whatever was meant by St. *James*, then we must inquire somewhat farther, to know, what the last Words, *Guilty of all*, can signify. They certainly carry an Appearance of astonishing Severity. And yet there is no Necessity of understanding them to be any thing more than a strong Expression, (for all the Eastern People expressed Things very strongly) importing, that whoever is thus blamable, is greatly blamable, and liable to a heavy Punishment. There is one Passage in St. *Matthew* particularly, which will shew this in a clear Light: I mean that, where our Saviour tells the Jews, that *on them should come all the righteous Blood shed upon the Earth, from the Blood of righteous Abel unto the Blood of Zacharias the Son of Barachias, whom they slew between the Temple and the Altar.* Nor was he content with saying so once, but repeats it immediately, *Verily I say unto you, all these Things shall come upon this Generation*[i]. What could he possibly mean here? Not literally, that any of the Jews should be punished on

[i] Matth. xxiii. 35, 36.

account

account of the Murder of *Abel*; for they did not ſo much as deſcend from his Murderer: nor that any of that Generation ſhould undergo the Sentence of God for what another Generation did: But, as their Wickedneſs, eſpecially in perſecuting Him and his Diſciples, was, and he foreſaw would be, incredibly great, he deſigned to ſay in the moſt forcible Manner, that their Puniſhment ſhould be ſo too: And to raiſe, if poſſible, their Conceptions of it high enough, he purpoſely uſes Terms, which, if taken ſtrictly, would be too high; and ſpeaks, as if every innocent Man, that had ever been put to Death, ſhould have his Blood required at their Hands. Nor did he alone venture on ſuch Forms of Speech. St. *John* hath exactly the ſame, where he ſaith, that *in Babylon was found the Blood of all, that were ſlain upon the Earth* [k]. This may ſeem to us taking a ſtrange Liberty: but it was familiar to the Jews: their own Writers ſince are full of it; and abound in Sayings, which they intend only for bold Figures, and the Ignorant miſtake for groſs Abſurdities. Indeed all Languages have more or leſs in them of this kind: only we overlook it in our own,

[k] Rev. xviii. 24.

while

while we are shocked at it in others. To say, that a Man hath done all the Mischief or suffered all the Misery, in the World, is so common a Way of speaking, that perhaps we shall be surprised, upon Recollection, to find it quite as strong, as the before-mentioned ones out of Scripture. Just in the same Manner, then, as the Jews of that one Age were to bear the Punishment of all the righteous Blood, that had been shed in all Ages; the wilful Breakers of one Commandment incur the Guilt of breaking all the Commandments: that is, their Crime is very great, and their Condemnation shall be in Proportion. For they, who offend but against a single Precept, yet if they do it deliberately and habitually, which, you have seen, is the Case here supposed, are doubtless Faulty to a much greater Degree, than such as offend against more, but less frequently, and without Design.

Had therefore the Words of the Text been true only in this looser Sense, they had still, considering the Genius of the Eastern Stile, been very justifiable. But indeed there is much further Truth in them. For *Guilty of*, may mean liable to; the Scripture saith, *Guilty of*

of Death [l], as well as of Sin: and then, *Guilty of all*, may mean, liable to all the Punishments denounced by the Law, in his proper Degree. Or though we suppose the Phrase to signify, as it seems to do, Guilty of breaking all the Precepts of the Law; still when any Person presumptuously transgresses one Part, his Guilt in some Measure extends to the Whole. For the Whole of God's Law is but one System, and every Part of it connected with every other; so that, if any is broken, all are weakened. The Whole of Piety and Virtue is but one Disposition of Mind, one uniform Principle of doing what is fit: and if what is unfit may ever be done; there can be no Reason assigned, why it may not always be done [m]. Further yet: The Lawgiver's Title to command, from which the Law derives its whole Force, this too is one and the same throughout: and if he hath not a Right to be obeyed in every Article, he hath no Right to be obeyed at all. The Observation, that fol-

[l] Matth. xxvi. 66.

[m] The Simile of Max. Tyr. Diss. 31. §. 2. Edit. 1740, tho' applied somewhat differently by him, is applicable to this Purpose also. *Ωσπερ γαρ εν ταις των μελων αρμονιαις, το παραλειφθεν, κᾀν σμικρον η, διαλυει τον κοσμον τυ μελυς, υτω κᾀν τη τυ βιυ αρμονιᾳ. κτλ.*

 lows

lows in the Verſe after the Text, is perfectly juſt: *he that ſaid, Do not commit Adultery, ſaid alſo, Do not Kill:* nor is there a higher Regard due to him in one Caſe, than in the other. Whoever therefore denies the Obligation of any Precept, which he admits to be a Precept, diſowns the whole Authority of God at once: for he hath not a Jot more in the reſt, than he hath in this; where he is allowed none [n]. Or if a Perſon only refuſes to obey a Commandment, which he thinks is not one; yet, if his thinking ſo proceeds from his Unwillingneſs to think otherwiſe, it may be a near Approach to the ſame Guilt: for at this Rate, he may reject them all, if he diſlikes them all. Nay, ſuppoſing he doth not ſet himſelf to diſbelieve his Duty, but is prevailed on by Temptation to neglect ſome Part: yet then, he not only might, with juſt as good Reaſon, neglect every Part, but probably it is from no Principle of Conſcience, that he performs any. Attention to his Intereſt, or Want of Inclination, may keep him good in moſt Caſes beſides: but if the Fear of God, or Love of Virtue, were what kept

[n] The Talmudiſts obſerve this particularly concerning a Denial of the Sabbath. כולה הכופר בשבת כאילו כופר בכל התורה *Aben Eſra* gives the Reaſon: For he denies the Creation. Seld. de Jure Nat. & Gent. l. 3. c. 10.

him ſo, one ſhould think it would have kept him from one Sin, as well as from another. And therefore he that violates any divine Command, it may be feared, is guilty in the reſt, which he obſerves, of not obſerving them on ſuch Grounds, as he ſhould: which, to the Purpoſes of Religion and his own future Happineſs, is too near a-kin to not obſerving them at all. For if an Action, which would otherwiſe be a good one, is done from a Motive, that hath no good in it; this cannot be the Service, that God requires. And on ſome of theſe Accounts perhaps it is, that *Tully* affirms, in Words pretty like thoſe of the Text, that whoever is deſtitute of any one Virtue, is poſſeſſed of none [o].

But I would not be quite ſo rigid neither. There aredoubtleſs but too many inconſiſtent Perſons, much to be pitied, and often in ſeveral Particulars to be eſteemed, that ſhew a true and great Regard to their Duty in ſome Things, while in others they are inticed to act very ill. Theſe now are not the moſt highly faulty, but ſtill really faulty, with reſpect to

[o] Ecquid ſcis igitur—virtutem—ſi unam confeſſus ſis te non habere, nullam eſſe te habiturum? Tuſc. Diſp. lib. 2. §. 13. Edit. Davies. Where ſee other Authorities in the Notes. See alſo De Fin. 5—23.

the whole of God's Law. In thoſe Branches, which they tranſgreſs, there can be no Queſtion of their Guilt: and in thoſe, which they obſerve, they are guilty at leaſt of laying in their own Way grievous Temptations to tranſgreſs them. For the Indulgence of any Sin ſtrangely leads Men at all Times, and almoſt forces them at ſome Times, into the Commiſſion of many more, which poſſibly they little thought of: till at the Breach, which appeared ſmall and harmleſs, there ruſhes in a Torrent, that overwhelms every Thing right in them: and thus by *offending in one Point*, they too frequently become, in the ſtricteſt Senſe, *guilty of all* [p]. Their Guilt indeed, as to theſe latter Sins, is not complete, till they have committed them: but it began, when they brought themſelves firſt into the Hazard of committing them. And even ſhould they be ſo happy as to eſcape, running into Danger is no ſmall Miſbehaviour.

Another Fault of theirs, with reſpect to ſuch Parts of God's Law, as they do not perſonally break, is, that their Example of offending in ſome Points encourages the World

[p] Si fatereris ſcienter januam incendiſſe, ſi unum ſignum, puto, tota domus intelligeretur ex parte. Nec enim quiſquam omnia incendit, ſed unam aliquam partem, ex qua ſurgat in omnia ſe ſparſurus ignis. Sen. Excerpt. Declan. lib. 5. Controv. 5.

around them to offend in other Points: For if You indulge the Vice which you like, why may not They indulge the Vices they like? And thus, though you are guilty of practising but one Sin, you are guilty of promoting the Practice of every Sin; and will share in the Crime, and consequently in the Punishment, not only of what you directly do, but perhaps of what you abhor, because you have been the Occasion of others doing it.

But there is still a Sense left, and a very interesting one, in which the Words of St. *James* are true. *The Royal Law*, that he mentions just before the Text, and refers to in it, is plainly the Law of the Kingdom of Christ, that is, the Gospel. Now the Gospel Terms of Salvation are, that whoever sincerely, tho' imperfectly, observes the Whole of its Precepts, is intitled, through Faith, to its Forgiveness and Rewards: but if a Person is wilfully guilty of any one Sin, so long as he continues in that State, *Christ shall profit him nothing*[q]. For, even supposing him pardoned before, that Pardon was but a conditional one, and cannot become absolute, till the Time of his Trial is over. Every presump-

[q] Gal. iii. 2.

tuous Transgression opens the Account anew, which Repentance and Amendment had closed: and makes him a Debtor once again, for every Thing that he hath ever done amiss. Read but the Parable of the unmerciful Servant, in the 18th Chapter of St. *Matthew*, and you will be perfectly satisfied of this Truth. Indeed the very Reason of the Thing shews, that whoever performs not all the Conditions of the Christian Covenant, is intitled to none of the Benefits of it: but though his Case shall doubtless be equitably considered, and with due Allowances to his former Virtue or Penitence, yet it shall not be considered as coming under the Promises of the Gospel; but he remains chargeable, though not with any Thing he hath not done, yet with every Thing he hath done. And which of God's Commandments is there, that we have not, at some Time, in some Degree, wilfully transgressed? This therefore is a very important Sense, were there no other, in which he, who offends in one Point, is guilty of all.

You see then, how intirely justifiable this Passage of St. *James* appears, when well examined. And the chief Things, to be remembered concerning it, are these. He doth not mean, that committing one Sin makes our Condition

Condition juſt as bad, as committing ever ſo many. But he may reaſonably mean, that being vicious in any Reſpect weakens and endangers our Virtue in every Reſpect: that deliberately breaking God's Law, but in one Caſe, implies in it a Denial of his Authority in all Caſes; and not only, in juſt Conſequence, may, but daily, in Fact, doth produce an univerſal Diſregard to him, both in ourſelves and others: nay, ſuppoſing the Miſchief to ſtop far ſhort of this, yet that a Failure in any ſingle Condition of the Goſpel Covenant precludes us from all the Rewards, and in a Degree proportioned to the Greatneſs of the Failure, will bring upon us all the Threatenings of it. Let us therefore now conſider

II. The Inferences, to be drawn from the Words, thus explained; which are two.

1. Since it is neither affirmed by St. *James*, nor true in itſelf, that the Guilt of any one Sin is equal to the Guilt of ever ſo great a Multitude of Sins: there can be no Encouragement in the World for the Wicked to run on into ſtill more Wickedneſs; but, on the contrary, next to becoming uniformly good, their moſt ſerious Intereſt lies in leſſening the Number and Meaſure of the Things, in which

they are bad. Too commonly, when once Men are fallen into the Practice of a Sin, either it requires another to conceal or support it, or a second wrong Inclination claims the same Right to Indulgence as the first, or uneasy Reflexions drive them to seek for Consolation from irreligious Principles, or Loss of Reputation amongst the Virtuous, reduces them to court Acceptance at any Rate they can have it, among the Vicious. And though they are sensible, that all this plunges them deeper, yet their Reasoning is, that any one Sin, if the Scripture be true, makes their Case desperate, and ever so many can do no more: that, if they are to be miserable hereafter, whoever ventures upon the Thing, it is errant Absurdity in him to be solicitous about the Degree of it, and live in a State of perpetual Inconsistency, neither hoping at all for the Rewards of Virtue, nor enjoying freely the Pleasures of Vice. Now undeniably this Sort of Conduct is a Folly, and there is only one Sort greater: but that is the very one, of which you make Choice: resolving to do amiss in more Points, because you do amiss in some; and to make your Condition as much worse as you can, because it is a very bad one already.

If the Misery, which God will inflict hereafter, is to be feared, surely an Increase of it is, exactly in Proportion, so much more to be feared: and, in such a Case as this, a large Increase must be expected. There may be Excuses pleaded for falling into some Faults: but there can be no Excuse for adding others to them wilfully. There may be Hope of Amendment, while you are gone but a little wrong: and perhaps you please yourself with the Thought that you shall amend: at least the Time may come, when that Prospect, if you could entertain it, would be a pleasing one indeed. Why then, in the mean while, will you be needlessly deviating farther and farther; and laying daily new Obstacles, (some of which may prove insuperable) in the Way of your own Return? Possibly indeed you may utterly despise such Considerations as these, and think it great Bravery to do so. But it is an unwise Bravery. You are not certain, you cannot be certain, that either Immorality or Contempt of Religion are safe Things. And if they are unsafe, the less you are guilty of either, the better. Were a future Account only possible, it ought to put you under no small Restraints: but how much greater, if it be probable, if it

be certain? It is very true, the only Behaviour that will ſecure you thoroughly, is keeping clear of every Thing bad. But at leaſt do not go Lengths, to which you are not tempted: do not go every Length, to which you are tempted. If you will be debauched, why will you be injurious too? If you will be both diſſolute and diſhoneſt, why need you be profane alſo, and ſcorn and ridicule Virtue and Piety, as well as neglect them? Or, on the other Hand, however you act in Relation to Things of the next World, why ſhould you abandon yourſelf to Profligateneſs and Folly in reſpect of this, and be wretched before your Time? Fear not in the leaſt, but there will be Guilt and Miſchief full enough in thoſe Kinds and Degrees of Sin, from which you imagine you cannot abſtain: ſo that you will have no Occaſion to increaſe the Liſt of them wantonly. And be aſſured, that however painful it may be to retreat, or ſtop ſhort where you are, going farther on will be much more ſo, probably in this Life, but aſſuredly hereafter. For if God will at all diſtinguiſh then between good and bad, (as he muſt and will, if he be juſt, or wiſe, or true,) he will as certainly

tainly diſtinguiſh, and to Purpoſe too, between bad and worſe.

But abſurd as it would be to reckon one Sin as dangerous as many, (againſt which, notwithſtanding, it was needful to give a ſtrong Caution, becauſe the Text, at firſt ſight, may appear to favour it,) ſtill the oppoſite Error is equally abſurd, which yet, in ſpite of the Text, the whole Scripture, and the plaineſt Dictates of common Reaſon, great Multitudes will perſiſt in; that, I mean, of thinking, or acting as if they thought, that ſince every one is peculiarly inclined to ſome Fault or other, he will be diſpenſed with in that, provided he performs but the reſt of his Duty tolerably well. And therefore,

2. The principal Inference, to be drawn from St. *James*'s Words, is, that no one Sin whatever can be wilfully indulged, without forfeiting our Salvation. Indeed if it could; if our Obedience may ſafely fail juſt where alone it is, properly ſpeaking, tried; that is, where we find ourſelves peculiarly tempted to diſobey; what Proof do we give of any Regard to Virtue, or what muſt become of the Intereſts of it in the World? Few People have above one or two Faults, to which they are much addicted:

dicted: ſo that allowing them theſe, is allowing them all; and giving them Leave to be as wicked, as they want to be. Or ſuppoſing they have ſeveral bad Inclinations; yet, if one of them is to be forgiven, becauſe it is a Favourite; why not the reſt, if they can make the ſame Plea? And further, if your Faults are to be overlooked in the Day of Judgment, why not the different Faults of every one elſe? One Perſon is prone to Intemperance, another to Lewdneſs, a third to Falſehood and Diſhoneſty, a fourth to Malice and Revenge. If Inclination, and Conſtitution, and what we are pleaſed to call Nature, is to be a Warrant for any of theſe, why not for all? But you will plead it perhaps only for ſmall Sins. And ſo one is indulged firſt, becauſe it is but a little one: then another, becauſe it is not much bigger: and where ſhall we ſtop, or in what will this end? Every ones Sin is ſmall in his own Opinion, and none is ſo in Reality. For, be it in what Inſtance it will, diſobeying our Maker, violating our Conſciences, and breaking through the ſacred Bonds of Truth and Duty, can never be deemed a ſlight Matter, nor will it hereafter be found ſo.

But

But is there no Allowance then to be made for human Weakneſs, and the Strength of Temptation? Undoubtedly great Allowance, in all ſuch Failings, as we watch and ſtrive and pray againſt, and perſevere in oppoſing. But then, whoever doth this in Earneſt, will certainly gain Ground of his Failings; and therefore whoever gains little or no Ground, doth not do it in Earneſt. Wiſhing now and then that we were better, being grieved a little when we think how bad we are, and, in a ſudden Fit of Goodneſs, making a faint Eſſay towards Reformation, and laying it aſide again: this is far from performing, what, by the Aſſiſtance of Heaven, we might, if we would. And whoever can think that no more is expected of him, muſt think at the ſame Time, that God hath very little Attention to the Obſervance of his Laws, and that his Laws are of very little Uſe towards the Government of the World.

All Perſons therefore, who have a proper Regard to ſome Branches of their Duty, but not to others, ought ſeriouſly to conſider, that they are doing a great Deal, without doing any thing to Effect, for Want of doing the Whole: that it muſt be peculiarly grievous to

them in the next Life, to come ſo near the Kingdom of Heaven, and yet to fall ſhort of it; to be *almoſt*, but not *altogether*, *Chriſtians* [r]. Since they take Pains to correct Part of their bad Inclinations, it cannot but be worth their while to correct the reſt. Either it will not be very difficult, or the Difficulty will not continue very long, or the Reward will be very ample. And whichſoever is the Caſe, it muſt evidently be their Intereſt to make their Lives conſiſtent, their Characters clear, and their Hearts eaſy, by *walking in every Ordinance of the Lord blameleſs* [s]: for *ſo ſhall we not be confounded, if we have Reſpect unto all his Commandments* [t].

But then we muſt ever underſtand this, not only of moral Duties, not only of the Duties of natural Religion, but of revealed alſo: and particularly of that great and leading Commandment, *that we believe on the Name of his Son Jeſus Chriſt* [u]: believe in him practically, as well as ſpeculatively; believe in him as our Redeemer and Mediator, no leſs than our Inſtructor: truſting in his Merits for Pardon and Acceptance; in his Grace for Strength and

[r] Acts xxvi. 28, 29. [s] Luke i. 6. [t] Pſal. cxix. 6.
[u] 1 John iii. 23.

Comfort;

Comfort; and seeking to *be found in Him, not having our own Righteousness, which is of the Law, but that which is of God by Faith* [w]. For we have all offended in every Point: and having Recourse to this one, of penitent Faith in Christ, working by Love, is our only Cure for past Sins, our only Means of future Obedience. *By the Deeds of the Law shall no Flesh be justified* [x]; but *whosoever believeth in Him, shall not be ashamed* [y].

[w] Phil. iii. 9. [x] Rom. iii. 20. [y] Rom. x. 11.

SERMON IV.

ROM. xii. 3.

For I say, through the Grace given unto me, to every Man that is among you, not to think of himself more highly than he ought to think: but to think soberly, accordingly as God hath dealt to every Man the Measure of Faith.

THESE Words express the Duty of Humility so accurately, and carry in the very Manner of stating it so full and clear an Evidence of its Obligation, that one would hope no Man could read or hear them, without being convinced, that he ought to do what they enjoin.

There are Directions of Scripture, concerning this Matter, which some pretend to be impracticable, and unfit to be practised: As where St. *Paul* himself exhorts, *In Lowliness of Mind let each esteem other better than them-*

selves [a]; and St. *Peter, All of you be subject one to another* [b]. In relation to such Passages it hath been pleaded, that, were every one to think thus, many must think falsely; which we ought not to do if we could, and for the most Part, in this Case, cannot do if we would, but only pretend to it hypocritically: that Men would be inwardly prouder and outwardly more troublesome, with this affected Humility, than without it [c]: that the Mockery of a mutual Submission in every Thing must fill human Life with perpetual Embarrassments; and whilst every one insisted upon obeying, no one would be left to rule or preserve Order [d].

Now the Absurdity of such Behaviour indeed is very glaring. But for that Reason the Apostles are not to be understood, as they need not, in a Sense that gives Encouragement to it. Practical Writers on religious and moral Subjects, considering how hardly the Generality are brought to entertain sufficiently strict

[a] Phil. ii. 3. [b] 1 Pet. v. 5.

[c] *Ο γαρ ὑπο ατυφια * τυφος τυφομενος, παντων χαλεπωτατος.* M. Antonin. l. xii. §. 27.

* Ὑπο ατυφιας, vel επι ατυφια. Gat.

[d] *Celsus* affirmed unreasonably, that Christians had learned their Notions of Humility from *Plato* misunderstood. *Orig. against Celsus*, vi. 15.

4 Notions

Notions of their Duty, purpoſely expreſs it ſometimes in Words, which, taken literally, would be too ſtrict. For Abatements more than enough will not fail to be made: eſpecially in ſuch favourite Points, as that of the good Opinion, which we have of ourſelves. But in theſe two Apoſtolical Injunctions, only a very moderate Abatement is wanting. We are to eſteem others better, or ſuperior to us, not in Things where we know they are not, but in Things where we may juſtly ſuppoſe they are. And perhaps there is no Perſon, or however no pious and good Perſon, and to ſuch the Apoſtles wrote, but hath the Advantage of us in ſome Particulars; or at leaſt, from our fuller Acquaintance with our own Defects, may, on probable Grounds, be apprehended by us to have it. Or if not, yet *eſteeming* them ſuch, may, according to a frequent Uſe of the original Word ſo rendered [e], mean only treating them as ſuch. And though we muſt not do this, by making hollow and deceitful Profeſſions of Inferiority; yet we may do it, by concealing and waving our Claims to Superiority: not *being ſubject one to the other* on all Occaſions indeed,

[e] See Job xiii. 24. xix. 11. xxxiii. 10. xli. 27, 29. Phil. iii. 7, 8. See alſo a Letter in the *Nouvelle Bibliotheque*, Sep. 1742.

but on all proper ones, which are more than a few. It cannot be, that either of the Apoſtles ſhould intend to carry the Duty further; becauſe both of them acted in Stations of Authority themſelves, and preſcribed Rules to others how to act in them. But it is peculiarly impoſſible that St. Paul ſhould run into ſuch an Extreme: for he hath diſtinguiſhed very exactly the Obligations proceeding from the different Ranks and Improvements of Men, which implies, that they muſt be conſcious of them. And if he had given no other Proof of his underſtanding the Nature of Humility aright, the Text alone affords a ſtrong Demonſtration of it.

For what doth he there ſay, *through the Grace given unto him,* in Virtue of the Dignity graciouſly conferred upon him, *to every one amongſt us,* for our Direction in this Behalf? Only, *not to think of ourſelves more highly, than we ought to think; but to think ſoberly, according as God hath dealt to every Man the Meaſure of Faith:* that is, according to the real Degree of Piety and Virtue, which, through God's Mercy, our Faith in Chriſt hath produced; or rather, taking the Word, *Faith,* in a leſs common, but more ſuitable Meaning,

according to the real Value of the ſeveral Talents, which God hath intruſted to our faithful Management.

This we muſt allow to be a moſt equitable Way of ſtating the Duty in general. And therefore it may be hoped we ſhall proceed, with willing Minds, to examine more particularly,

Firſt, What Manner of Thinking concerning ourſelves; and,

Secondly, What Manner of Acting towards others, our Obligation to Humility, thus explained, requires. The Former of theſe I ſhall conſider now: the Latter, God willing, hereafter. At preſent then let us inquire, How we ought to think of ourſelves. And,

1. We ought plainly not to think, that we are poſſeſſed of any other good Qualities or Advantages, or any greater Eminence in them, than in Truth we are: which yet is a Point, that we frequently miſapprehend. Self-Love, an Affection inſeparable from us, tempts us to be wonderfully eaſy of Belief in our own Favour; and extremely ſlow to diſcern, and induſtrious to diſguiſe even to our own View, whatever tends to leſſen us. Then, as for the

Information, which we might receive from others, whoever hints the least Thing, which is not for our Honour, we suspect immediately must do it, if not from ill Design, yet at best from Want of Judgement: and, if we can but find a Shadow of Probability for either Suspicion, we soon conclude, that only Malice or Ignorance can find Fault with us. To confirm which Persuasion, we see perhaps the Generality of our Acquaintance treat us with Marks of considerable Regard: and this we interpret as a most undeniable Token that we deserve it all; though perhaps it arises merely from their Civility, and Desire of living well with us. Or it may be our Case is yet worse: and we are misled by Persons, who from bad Motives make it their Business to fill us with extravagant Notions of our own Accomplishments and Pre-eminences. The Rich and Great indeed suffer most by these Wretches: and therefore should above all be on their Guard against them. But Persons of every Degree, down to the very lowest, have their Flatterers. And even the grossest Flattery is commonly believed: but if it be conducted with any Art, it seldom fails. And in Fact, from one or other of these Causes, into what astonishing Errors,

about their own Qualifications do we ſee People fall!

The Inſtances are numberleſs, were no others to be mentioned, of Perſons deluding themſelves in the moſt important of all Points, the State of their Souls: miſtaking uncharitable Zeal, or lifeleſs Formality, or enthuſiaſtic Tranſports, for true Religion; or bad-tempered Rigidneſs, or prudential Regularity, or conſtitutional Good-nature, for true Virtue: ſaying inwardly, as the Revelation of St. *John* expreſſes it, *I am rich, and increaſed with Goods, and have Need of nothing; and not knowing, that they are wretched and poor and blind and naked*[f]. But in ſuch Matters alſo, as others are apt to value themſelves upon, how eſtabliſhed an Obſervation is it, that, from Things of the greateſt Importance down to the verieſt Trifles, almoſt all the World are continually judging wrong of their own Title to Eſteem; and vain of imagined Excellencies, where at moſt they do but equal thoſe about them, or perhaps are peculiarly deficient. We can eaſily remark this in our Neighbours: but we ſtrangely overlook it in ourſelves; and forget, that their Failings are only thoſe of Human Nature;

[f] Rev. iii. 17.

to which with the ſame Nature, we are juſt as liable, and it may be full as guilty of them.

Some few indeed, through Exceſs of Modeſty, or Weakneſs of Spirits, or Strength of Temptation, fall into the oppoſite Extreme, of Diffidence or even Deſpondency. And theſe, were they *to think ſoberly* and juſtly, would think better of themſelves; to which they ought to be excited with the moſt compaſſionate Earneſtneſs. But the general Caution, to the reſt of us, muſt ever be, not to think too well: to make ſure of abating ſufficiently from what they who pay Court to us, would ſuggeſt; and attend to the leſs favourable Judgements concerning us, that others paſs: not to bear them the leaſt Ill-will on that Account; but ſolely to learn that Knowledge of ourſelves, which we are happy, if we learn any Way. The beſt of outward Monitors indeed is a faithful and prudent Friend; if we have ſuch a one, and will permit him to act as ſuch. But the main Article is, that each take Care to be his own Friend; by ſtudying his own Qualifications impartially, and as one bound in Conſcience to be an upright Judge. *For if a Man think himſelf to be ſomething, when*

he

he is nothing, he deceiveth himſelf. But let every Man prove his own Work [g].

2. Having examined, what our Qualifications are, the next Point is to ſettle the true Value of them. For one Perſon is proud of what another deſpiſes: and therefore we have done nothing, till we have fixed, what Things deſerve Eſteem, and in what Degree.

Now indiſputably the ſtrongeſt Claim is that of a pious and benevolent and reaſonable Diſpoſition, expreſſed in a ſuitable Behaviour. This, however diſregarded by a thoughtleſs World, is the *one thing needful* [h]: the Groundwork of private and public, of preſent and future Happineſs. The human Heart, notwithſtanding its Degeneracy, loves and reverences it, even though unwillingly, wherever ſeen: ſuperior Orders of Beings look down upon it with Complacency, and God himſelf approves it, as his own Reſemblance. To this Character then let every one aſpire, who ſeeks true Honour, and place nothing in Competition with it. *Thus ſaith the Lord, Let not the wiſe Man glory in his Wiſdom; neither let the mighty Man glory in his Might; let not the rich Man glory in his Riches. But let him,*

[g] Gal. vi. 3, 4. [h] Luke x. 42.

that glorieth, glory in this; that he understandeth and knoweth me; that I am the Lord, which exercise Loving-kindness, Judgement and Righteousness in the Earth: for in these Things I delight, saith the Lord[i].

But then we may value ourselves, even on this acknowledged Excellency, much too highly. For indeed a Temper and Conduct of unmixed Obedience would be no more, than plain Reason and common Sense dictates. And therefore our Saviour's Precept is absolutely right: *When ye shall have done all those Things, which are commanded you, say, We are unprofitable Servants*, that is, we have merited nothing: *we have done that, which was our Duty to do*[k]. Right Behaviour is only what ought to be expected: wrong Behaviour is the Thing to be wondered at. And therefore when any one admires and is astonished at his own Goodness, in all Likelihood he is but lately and imperfectly become good; and holds himself in such Account for what he doth, either because he doth it with Difficulty, or because he understands but in Part what he ought to do. For they who act from confirmed Habits, act with Ease; and imagine, that others would of

[i] Jer. ix. 23. 24. [k] Luke xvii. 10.

Course

Courſe do as well and better, being very ſenſible of their own Failings. Or however perfect the Self-Applauder may be in the Eyes of Men, his *Heart is not right*, but far from it, *in the Sight of God*[l]: nor will he have taken one ſingle effectual Step towards the Kingdom of Heaven, till he is filled with a deep Senſe of his own Sinfulneſs, and Unworthineſs to be accepted, otherwiſe than through Him, *who of God is made unto us Wiſdom and Righteouſneſs and Sanctification and Redemption; that, according as it is written, He that glorieth, let him glory in the Lord*[m].

If then we may think too favourably of ourſelves even for our Piety and Virtue: how much more for other Qualities, which are good or bad only as they are employed!

Some inſiſt greatly on their high Birth, or diſtinguiſhed Rank. And unqueſtionably Honour is due to all Superiors; and eſpecially to thoſe, whoſe Anceſtors alſo have been of remarkable Note and Worth: which their Deſcendants may be ſucceſsfully excited to imitate, by ſeeing it thus reſpected. The Education of ſuch too ſhould be of the beſt Kind. And therefore we readily preſume on theſe Accounts,

l Acts viii. 21. m 1 Cor. i. 30, 31.

that

that their Dispositions likewise are noble and generous, like the Blood which runs in their Veins, and the Company which they are qualified to keep. But still this is only Presumption. When it proves true in Fact, they are the Supports and the Blessings of Society. But when the Contrary happens, though, whatever Submission their Station requires, or prudent Custom hath allotted to them, should be carefully paid; yet they ought to be very sensible of the essential Distinction between external Deference and inward Veneration; and properly reminded, if there be Need, how much more honourable it is, to be a wise and good Person onesself, than to be sprung from ever so many; and to be useful in the lowest Condition of Life, than mischievous or insignificant in the highest.

Others claim to be valued on their superior Wealth. And in Case it was acquired by laudable Methods, and is applied to beneficial Purposes, their Claim in its Degree is just. But if they have gained it by Fraud or Extortion or Servility; if they abuse it to the Service of Luxury or Vanity or Oppression; or withhold it from those to whom Reason and Religion direct them to impart of it; the poorest Wretch

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on Earth, with an humble and contented and honeſt Heart, is unſpeakably worthier of Eſteem than they.

Another Foundation of Self-Complacency with ſome is their Dexterity in Buſineſs, and carrying on the Deſigns which they form. But of what Sort are their Deſigns? What Ways do they take to attain them? Are their Acquaintance and Neighbours, their Country and Mankind, the better or the worſe for their Abilities? If *the Wiſe in their Generation* [n] cannot return good Anſwers to ſuch Queſtions as theſe, they muſt not expect very ſincere Congratulations from others on this Notableneſs of theirs; and ſooner or later they will find but little Comfort in it themſelves.

A more innocent Claim to Reputation, for the moſt part, is that of ſuperior Knowledge and Learning. Yet *Science, falſely ſo called* [o], may be pernicious beyond any Thing: eſpecially that horrible Sort, which diſſolves the Ties of Religion and Morals, and ſupplants the Hopes of eternal Happineſs. Yet there are Perſons, who can be vain of it. But even true Knowledge deſerves our Praiſe chiefly in Proportion to its Uſefulneſs: and the moſt uſeful

[n] Luke xvi. 8. [o] 1 Tim. vi. 20.

of all, being that which is the moſt common, affords but ſmall Ground for over-weening Self-Opinion. Beſides; the more we really know, the more conſcious we ſhall be how imperfectly we comprehend Things, and how much there is left behind, of which we are ignorant. When therefore St. *Paul* ſaith, that *Knowledge puffeth up*, he means imaginary and miſapplied Knowledge. For he adds, that *if any Man thinketh that he knoweth any thing*, that is completely, *he knoweth nothing yet, as he ought to know* [p]. And ſuch conceited Fancies, making Men negligent and raſh, and prompting them to deſpiſe the Judgements and Reaſons of others, lead them into perpetual Errors.

As for the other Temptations to Pride, which prevail with the Gay and Thoughtleſs, it would ſcarce be proper to ſay more about them from hence, than to beg they would reflect, how ſhort-lived and precarious, how trifling and ridiculous, the Things often are on which they, in good Earneſt, plume themſelves: how few have ever been laſtingly the happier for them even in this World, beyond which they cannot extend; how many have

[p] 1 Cor. viii. 1, 2.

been

been betrayed to eternal as well as temporal Ruin by injudicious Fondneſs of excelling in them. So important is it to proportion our Affections duly: for Want of which, Multitudes are proud of their Vices, and *glory in their Shame* [q].

3. After this we muſt proceed to examine, what Deductions are to be made from the Value of our Accompliſhments and Advantages, on Account of our Deficiencies and Diſadvantages. For till we have balanced the one againſt the other, we can no more judge of our own Merit, than we can of our Wealth, by caſting up the Sums, which are in our Poſſeſſion, or due to us, without ſtating what we owe. One immoral, mean or diſagreeable Quality may obſcure the Luſtre of many Virtues and Ornaments. Nay, ſome Faults may give ſo unhappy a Turn to Diſpoſitions very laudable in themſelves, as to make them do Harm, inſtead of Good: and much more then may thoſe which are of a Nature indifferent, or valuable only in a lower Degree, be ſo perverted. Unleſs therefore we ſearch into this Matter, we ſhall in Effect know nothing of ourſelves. And as it is yet more mortifying

[q] Phil. iii. 19.

to acknowledge Things which make against us, than to quit our Pretensions to those which make for us; without the utmost Care, we shall certainly decide partially in our own Favour on the present Head. But

4. Supposing that Danger avoided, a further Direction, equally needful, is, to be cautious in comparing ourselves with others. This we are commonly in so much haste to do, that it plainly shews, which of the Scales we design beforehand shall preponderate. Now judging too harshly of others, both injures Them, and may greatly mislead Us: judging at all of them is but seldom needful: and usually judging right is very difficult. Their Circumstances and Characters are often unknown, often purposely misrepresented. Modest secret Merit is frequently the greatest: and Qualifications, not so shining as ours, may be more beneficial. They, who have considerable Defects, which we have not, may be free from as considerable ones, which we have; or be indued with Virtues, which may amply compensate for them. If we resolve to compare, we ought to make Allowance for every thing of this Kind: and provided we make it duly, we may begin our Comparisons as soon as we please; but shall

ſhall perhaps have more Comfort in letting them alone. For if we begin, we muſt not think to ſtop at thoſe Inſtances, where we previouſly know the Reſult will be ſuch as we like. Moſt Perſons may find ſome, or many others, beneath them, in Birth, Fortune, Influence, Agreeableneſs, Underſtanding, Temper, Morals. But it would be generally full as eaſy, if it were but near ſo pleaſing, to meet with many more, greatly above them in theſe Reſpects, without ſeeking extremely far for it. Now, if we make the Compariſon only with ſuch as we deſpiſe; it is a poor Pre-eminence to be ſuperior to the Deſpicable. If only with ſuch, as are juſt about us; we lie open to St. *Paul's* Reproof, of thoſe, who *meaſuring themſelves by themſelves, and comparing themſelves amongſt themſelves, are not wiſe*[r]. And if we extend our Inquiry to a greater Diſtance; we may quickly diſcover Numbers, to whom we ſhall be tempted to look up with Envy; and They to look down upon Us, if we are known to them, with Pity or Contempt.

But, even on the Suppoſition, that we could maintain a Rank, in our ſeveral Pretenſions,

[r] 2 Cor. x. 12.

amongſt the Foremoſt of Mankind; yet there remains,

5. Another moſt material Point to be conſidered, What is Man? Still we ſhould find ourſelves poor, helpleſs, frail, ſhort-lived Wretches, liable every Moment to loſe every Thing that is valuable in us, and ſuffer every Thing, that is dreadful to us. Still the Imperfections, that we have in common with the Baſeſt of our Kind, would make up a far greater Part of our Condition, than the Advantages, that exalt us above them. And *why is Earth and Aſhes proud*[a]?

But if it be needful, to make us more fully ſenſible of our low Eſtate, let us lift up our Thoughts to thoſe numberleſs Hoſts of celeſtial Natures, whoſe Perfections though finite, are yet beyond our Conception, much more our Attainment: and to whom probably the firſt of Men bears no greater a Proportion, than a creeping Worm to one of us. For indeed, if we do but reflect, how little we are removed from the Brute Creation; how like them we are in our Make, our Wants, our Paſſions, our Follies: there will be Cauſe to think, that we

[a] Ecclus. x. 9.

are

are the meaneſt of rational Animals, barely deſerving the Name: above whom there are innumerable Orders and Worlds of Beings, each riſing beyond the other; and yet the higheſt immenſely diſtant from that One, before whom they are all *leſs than Nothing and Vanity*[t].

What then are we? Were we underived, were we independent, yet our whole Race, and the whole Earth we tread on, is a Trifle in the Univerſe, that makes no Figure in it, and would ſcarce be miſſed out of it. But indeed the low Exiſtence that we have, and the little Pre-eminences that belong to each of us in it, are not from ourſelves, but owing to the Bounty, and held by the Pleaſure, of another. All our natural Powers and Accompliſhments are the Work of his forming Hand: all our outward Advantages are appointed by his Providence: all our Improvements in Goodneſs flow from his Grace. *Who* then *hath made thee to differ from another; and what haſt thou, which thou didſt not receive? Now if thou didſt receive it; why doſt thou glory, as if thou hadſt not received it*[u]?

[t] Iſa. xl. 17. [u] 1 Cor. iv. 7.

But a ſtill more important Conſideration is, that we have received whatever we have, not as a Gift to be uſed in the Manner we pleaſe; but as a Truſt, to be employed for our own Advancement in Piety and Virtue, for the Benefit of our Fellow-Creatures, for the Honour of our Creator; to whom we muſt ſhortly render an Account of our Stewardſhip. The more hath been committed to us, the more we have to anſwer for: and not one of us is able to anſwer otherwiſe, than that in a greater Degree or a leſs, (God grant it be not a very great one!) we have neglected our Duty, committed Sins, and abuſed every Talent put into our Hands.

If then we will *think of ourſelves ſoberly, and as we ought to think,* we have abundant Cauſe to think with the utmoſt Self-Abaſement: inſtead of unprofitable and miſleading Compariſons one with another, each to compare our own Hearts and Lives with God's holy Laws: and being thence made ſenſible, how much we need his Mercy, ſubmiſſively to apply for it, in the Method which he hath preſcribed, through the Merits of our bleſſed Redeemer: *taking His Yoke upon us, and learning*

ing of Him to be meek, and lowly in Heart; for so shall we find Rest unto our Souls[w]: being *all subject one to another, and clothed with Humility; for God resisteth the Proud, but giveth Grace to the Humble*[x].

[w] Matth. xi. 29. [x] 1 Pet. v. 5.

SERMON V.

ROM. xii. 3.

For I ſay, through the Grace given unto me, to every Man that is among you, not to think of himſelf more highly than he ought to think; but to think ſoberly, according as God hath dealt to every Man the Meaſure of Faith.

EACH of the Virtues, which God requires us to practiſe, may be conſidered, either as being ſeated in our Hearts, or exerted in our Behaviour. That which the Text enjoins, taken in the firſt of theſe Views, conſiſts in forming a right Judgement of our own Qualifications, Rank and Circumſtances. If any one hath already no more than a juſt Opinion of theſe, he hath no Need to lower it. But becauſe we almoſt univerſally conceive too high Notions of ourſelves; condeſcending to entertain and act upon true and reaſonable ones,

hath acquired the Name of Humility or Lowliness. And our Obligation to be humble in Heart, comprehends the following Particulars: That we never imagine ourselves to have any Pre-eminences or Accomplishments, that we have not; nor esteem such as we have, beyond their undoubted Value: that we attend to our own Faults and Deficiences, no less than the Things in which we excel: that we be not fond of comparing ourselves with others; and that, if ever we do make such Comparisons, we make them fairly, and with proper Diffidence; and extend them to the Persons by whom, and the Cases in which, we are likeliest to be outdone: that we often call to mind the Meanness, the Frailties, the Infirmities, the Uncertainties of our mortal State; the immense Numbers of known, and probably of unknown, Orders of Beings, adorned with Glories, though finite, yet far beyond human Conception; and the absolutely boundless Perfections of our and their Creator: to whose voluntary Gift what any of us enjoys above another, is owing: who can deprive us the Moment he pleases, of our most favourite Advantages; and will demand from us one Day a serious Account of the Use that we have made of them: which the best

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of us all muſt be ſenſible, and few of us, if any, are ſenſible enough, hath in many Reſpects been a wrong and bad one.

This then is the firſt Part of Humility; bringing down to real Truth the exalted Imaginations, that are ſtrangely apt to get Poſſeſſion of us. The remaining one, after thinking reaſonably and modeſtly, is acting ſo. But in Order to this, two previous Rules muſt be obſerved.

1. The firſt is, to keep always in our Minds the right Eſtimation, which we are now ſuppoſed to have formed of ourſelves; and eſpecially to remember the mortifying Parts of it; for the others we ſeldom forget. Some Perſons indeed are addicted, above all at ſome Times, to look only on the dark Side of Things: and they ſhould be directed with Prudence to dwell proportionably on the more cheering Views. But the ſole Caution, which the Generality need, is to moderate their Fondneſs for the pleaſing Employment of contemplating the advantageous Part of their own Characters or Circumſtances. And every one, the greater Biaſs he perceives in himſelf that Way, for he may ſoon perceive it if he will, ſhould

ſhould apply the greater Watchfulneſs to correct it.

2. The ſecond Rule is, that, be our Rank amongſt our Fellow-Creatures, in any reſpect, as low as it will, we muſt accommodate our Minds to it, and never indulge any fraudulent Affectations of ſeeming ſuperior to what we are. All Perſons indeed, not only ſhould improve themſelves, but may alſo mend their Situation, by every lawful Method they can. And ſo far as mere Silence in the mean Time is a Concealment, it is a very innocent one. But to talk or behave unſuitably to our Condition, in order to make a better Figure than we have a Right to make, is by no means allowable: nor even to be inwardly diſturbed at its being ſuch as we find it. Our preſent Station is what the Providence of God hath for the preſent placed us in: and who are we, to ſay or think it is beneath us? We are not to chuſe the Part that we ſhall have to act on the Stage of Life: and if we are wiſe, we ſhall be glad that we are not. Well may it ſuffice, if, whatever is aſſigned us, we act it properly. Doing this with Cheerfulneſs, we ſhall be *acceptable to God, and approved of Men*[a]: whereas

[a] Rom. xiv. 18.

he, who labours to procure Honour by cheating the World with falſe Appearances, will be always uneaſy in himſelf, and ſoon detected and deſpiſed by other Men. So that indeed to live in a Lie is no more prudent, than lawful.

Reſolving therefore to preſerve conſtantly in our Thoughts what we really are, and be contented not to paſs for more; let us examine, what Behaviour muſt appear to us, in ſuch a State of Mind, rationally humble; firſt towards our Superiors, then our Equals, and laſtly our Inferiors.

I. To our Superiors in any kind, evidently we ought to pay, readily and freely, all that Submiſſion, which is their Due: and if we perceive within, a Reluctance to acknowledge their Superiority, or an Eagerneſs to diſpute the Degree of it, we ſhould mark that for a ſure Indication and bad Symptom of Pride.

One Sort of Pride there is, almoſt too ſhocking to mention, of which yet the human Heart is frequently guilty: Pride againſt God. This we ſhew in a dreadful Manner, when we can hardly condeſcend to humble ourſelves before him, and worſhip him; or ſeem aſhamed of the Homage that we pay him: when we take

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upon us to chuse, which of his Laws we will obey, and which not: when we vainly pry into the Secrets, that He hath hidden; or presume to despise, either the Plainness, or the Mysteriousness, of what He hath revealed: when we venture to commit Sins, in Confidence that our imagined Virtues will compensate for them; or treat the Gospel-Terms of Forgiveness, through the Merits of a crucified Saviour, as too degrading: when we ascribe to ourselves the good Actions, which He enables us to do, or the Prosperity, which He grants us to enjoy; or at any time express or conceive Indignation at his Disposal of the Affairs of his own World. As the Humility, which we owe to our Maker, is beyond Comparison the deepest: so must a Failure in it be unspeakably the most criminal. Therefore let us watch over ourselves in this Article with the utmost Care.

And, in the next Place, as to our earthly Superiors: whatever Persons have Authority over us, more or less, let us willingly pay them the Obedience and the Respect, which belongs to their Station; accepting with all Thankfulness the Benefits, that we receive from their Superintendence; and making such

equitable Allowances for their Miſtakes and Frailties, as we, in the ſame Circumſtances, might perhaps have much greater Need of, than we can eaſily imagine: *not exerciſing ourſelves in Matters, that are too high for us*[b]; nor fancying, that every one is qualified and ſituated to judge of every Thing. Whatever Perſons are in Rank above us, though without Authority, let us give them all ſuch Demonſtrations of honourable Regard, as may prove our Acquieſcence in the Diſtributions of a wiſe, though unſearchable Providence, as may ſtrengthen the Subordinations, which are neceſſary in Society; and procure us a Return of Good-will and Eſteem. Thoſe who have either naturally better Underſtandings, or a larger Share of acquired Knowledge; let us pay, not an unlimited, but a reaſonable Deference to their Judgements, and take Pleaſure in learning from them. Thoſe who are noted for Piety and Virtue; let us reverence and love them, and make them our Patterns. In a Word: whoever hath any Pre-eminence of any Sort, our Duty is, on all fit Occaſions to own it, both in Word and Deed: not with artful Contrivances to depreciate what we profeſs to re-

[b] Pſ. cxxxi. 2.

cognize;

cognize; but with ſuch Fairneſs and Simplicity, as we ſhould expect ourſelves.

II. Towards our equals, Humility of Behaviour conſiſts in ſhewing, that we are ſatisfied to live with them on equal Terms; *being kindly affectioned to them with brotherly Love, and in Honour preferring them*[c], as the Apoſtle exhorts, a few Verſes after the Text: not demanding the Reſpect, that we diſlike to pay again; but ſetting the Example of courteous and obliging Demeanour: not inſiſting, that our Humour or Intereſt ſhould be more regarded, than that of others, who have as good Pretenſions; but ſubmitting, for the Sake of Peace, to whatever, with tolerable Convenience and Propriety, we can: not ſeeking to engroſs, and confine to ourſelves, the Eſteem, the Friendſhip, the good Offices of every one; not complaining, whenever another is preferred to us, though by one who hath full Right to do as he pleaſes; nor, even if the Preference be unjuſt, reſenting it, as a more heinous Crime for our being the Sufferers, than if it were a different Perſon; but bearing with the Faults of our Fellow-Creatures, as we hope to have them bear with ours. All theſe Things

[c] Rom. xii. 10.

are ſo plainly equitable, that perhaps we can ſcarcely believe, that we ever fail to obſerve them. There can be no Harm however in a little Self-Inſpection upon the Subject. If it confirm our good Opinion of our own Conduct, it will give us great Delight: if not, it may do us great Service, by leading us to Amendment.

III. Humility of Behaviour towards our Inferiors, on which I ſhall chiefly enlarge, muſt be differently expreſſed in different Caſes. For ſome Kinds of Superiority ought not to be concealed, but ſupported and exerted. Parents, Maſters, Magiſtrates, Rulers and Officers of all Kinds, would offend againſt their Duty, were they to make their Authority inſignificant, by too large or unſeaſonable Condeſcenſions. Their Humility therefore conſiſts in acting as Perſons, intruſted with Power, not for their own Sake, but that of others: in aſſuming no greater Dignity, than is manifeſtly requiſite for good Ends: in joining with it always Humanity and Affability, and continuing, in the Midſt of it, to know themſelves: in procuring diligently, and hearing impartially, true Information and faithful Advice: being reaſonable in their Commands and Expecta-

tions, moderate in the Burthens they impose, merciful in the Punishments they inflict; and in *watching* over all committed to their Care, *as they that must give Account; that they may do it with Joy, and not with Grief* [d].

But, where Pre-eminence carries no Authority along with it, an humble Mind will be very backward to claim it; for seldom any desirable Effects will follow, and often many bad ones. It may not only give needless Pain to others, which ought never to be done, but incite them to Envy and Ill-will, produce Contentions and Injuries. Most Persons are uneasy at seeing themselves in a State of Inferiority: and therefore both Good-nature and Prudence forbid us to remind them of it without Necessity. If we are acknowledged to be Superiors, Humility, assisted by a little Discretion, will contribute much to perpetuate the Acknowledgement. And if the Case be doubtful, Haughtiness is by no Means the Way to procure a Determination in our Favour. People are not willing to let that be extorted from them by overbearing Violence, which, if left to themselves, they would have granted with Pleasure; and invited us to accept, as an equi-

[d] Heb. xiii. 17.

table

table Tribute. Finding any one take upon him, without a Call to do so, alarms every one: they know not, how far the Matter will be carried; put themselves on their Guard, and set up Pretensions in Opposition. And, if the Question comes once to be tried by popular Opinion, the World, we know, is exceedingly apt to judge wrong, especially when provoked to it. And if, after all, the Point should be given against us; what a superfluous Disgrace shall we have brought down upon our own Heads, by indulging a Spirit, the most incapable of bearing Disgrace that can be! *Solomon's* Counsel therefore is full of Wisdom. *Go not forth hastily to strive, lest thou know not what to do in the End thereof, when thy Neighbour hath put thee to Shame* [e]. But indeed Success, in a Competition of this Nature, may be altogether as hurtful, as Disappointment: by inspiring Men with a Vanity, which may prove the Parent of many Sins and Follies; may expose them to much Ridicule, and bring them also into more serious Inconveniences.

Nor must we avoid only such open and gross Claims to Superiority, but the indirect one of an assuming Air and Manner: which some

[e] Prov. xxv. 8.

have, to so strange a Degree, that they neither do nor say any Thing, without intimating their own Importance. Indeed our very Expressions of Civility may have Insolence mixed with them: for what is it less, if instead of treating those unaffectedly and frankly as our Equals, whom we ought, whether absolutely such in all Respects or not; we take Pains to signify to them politely, that we have the Goodness to stoop beneath our Rank, in order to put ourselves on a Level with them? Nay, were we in no Way to claim Regard from others, but in the most submissive and insinuating Way to court it; yet scarce any Thing is remoter from true Lowliness of Mind, than that Behaviour, which most sollicitously disguises itself under the Appearance of it, and enables us to climb by creeping. Or even supposing neither Interest nor Advancement to be our Point, but Applause only: still, both acting from a View to gain it, and taking too much Pleasure in the Consciousness of having gained it, are Snares highly dangerous to Humility. And many a Man, of otherwise virtuous Dispositions, hath by this one Weakness, of delighting in his own Praises, been corrupted insensibly within;

and

and brought to deserve an extremely different Character, from that which he coveted.

But to return. If concealing our Superiority be for the most part right; resenting a Delay, or even Refusal, to acknowledge it, must be exceedingly wrong. Other Persons may very innocently be ignorant of our Merit; may have no Concern to inquire about it; may be no Judges of it; or may be, on the other Hand, better Judges than we; and perceive, that we over-value ourselves. But suppose they mistake, or, yet worse, are unwilling to do us Justice; we are all so liable to the same Failing, that we must forgive it each other of Course, or there can be no longer any Peace upon Earth.

But farther: As no Displeasure should be expressed towards our Inferiors on such Occasions, no Contempt should be expressed towards them on any Occasion. The Distance is not so extremely great between the Highest and Lowest of Men: besides that they, who are inconsiderable in one Respect, may deserve highly in another; perhaps more than He, who despises them. Indeed no one is truly despicable, but for his wilful Follies and Sins: and the Sight of these ought to give us Concern, instead of Triumph; especially as we have all

too many of our own. But for the rest, be the outward Circumstances of others ever so mean, be the Defects of their Persons or Understandings ever so remarkable, the Disposer of all Things might have placed us originally in a Condition full as wretched, and may even still reduce us to it. Therefore *laugh no Man to scorn in the Bitterness of his Soul: for there is One, which humbleth and exalteth*[f]. Yet how needlessly and wantonly do Persons often make their Inferiors, especially in Rank and Fortune, suffer by their slighting and over-bearing Usage of them, both in Words and Actions! For an insolent Word, or even a haughty Look, is enough to cause bitter Affliction to him, that knows he must bear it, whether he deserves it or not. And when, to speak in the Son of *Sirach*'s Language, *The rich Man hath done Wrong, and yet he threateneth withal; when the Poor is wronged, and he must intreat also*[g]; the more helpless the Condition is, the more severely the Injury is felt. For People of the lowest Class have by Nature just the same Sensibility, that others have. And if others would reflect, how painful the feeling of such ill Usage is, they would surely scruple inflicting it on

[f] Ecclus. vii. 11. [g] Ecclus. xiii 3.

their

their Fellow-creatures; as not only barbarous, but ungenerous: for all the good Uſes of Subordination might be as well, and much better, ſecured by gentler Means.

But Superiors too frequently conſider thoſe beneath them, as worthy of no Attention; and their moſt ſerious Concerns in Life, as Things to be played with, and ſacrificed to every Caprice. Now this is one of the moſt pernicious Kinds of Pride. Let any one think ever ſo much too highly of himſelf; ſo long as he keeps it to himſelf, or only gives out a few ſlighter Intimations of it, though he is very blameable, yet he is tolerably harmleſs. But there are many, who cruſh their Inferiors under their Feet, without minding them: though perhaps, from Principle, ſuch as it is, they would behave to one of their Equals in a quite different Manner. But ſo far all Men are equal, that the meaneſt Wretch on Earth hath the ſame Right to live unmoleſted and free from Inſult, as the greateſt Monarch. And the Elevation of one above others, far from authorizing him to trample upon them, ſtrictly binds him, to ſhow Humanity, and afford Protection, to all thoſe, whom Provi-

dence, by putting them under his Power, hath intitled to his Patronage.

This then is the Conduct, which Humility requires of Superiors. And to preserve it steadily, they should call to Mind every Day, that the World was not made for Them alone, to gratify their Vanity or Love of Pleasure, to indulge their Humours, or pursue their Advantages, whatever becomes of the rest: but with Intent that each of them should contribute faithfully in his Station, as well as others in theirs, to the common Benefit of the Whole. For God hath created all Men of the same Nature and the same Blood: and united them by strong inward Ties of Sympathy and mutual Tenderness, which it is both impious and unnatural to break or loosen. *If I have withheld,* saith *Job, the Poor from his Desire, or have caused the Eyes of the Widow to fail; if I did despise the Cause of my Man-Servant or my Maid-Servant, when they contended with me: what then shall I do, when God riseth up; and when he visiteth, what shall I answer him? Did not He, that made me, make him? and did not One fashion us in the Womb*[h]? We, that are so fond of exalting ourselves above those of our own

[h] Job xxxi. 13—16.

own Species, who are equal to us in most Things; preferable, it may be, in many; and beneath us only in accidental Circumstances; do we consider, before how awful a Superior we stand all the time? One that *accepteth not the Person of Princes, nor regardeth the Rich more than the Poor: for they are all the Work of his Hands*[i]. But, happily for the Universe, his infinite Greatness is inseparably joined with infinite Mercy and Bounty: which blessed Union is the very Ground of the Worship that we pay him, of the Honour and Love, that fills our Hearts at the Thought of him. And what is it then, that deserves Love and Honour amongst Men? Surely to imitate this adorable Goodness of Him, who *is high above all Nations, and his Glory above the Heavens*: who *yet humbleth himself to behold the Things, that are in Heaven and Earth*[k]. *For though the Lord be high, yet hath he Respect unto the Lowly: but as for the Proud, he beholdeth them afar off*[l].

Let us therefore delight in shewing ourselves, by all fit Proofs of condescending Benevolence, the true Children of our heavenly Father, and the true Disciples of our gracious Redeemer;

[i] Job xxxiv. 19. [k] Ps. cxiii. 4. 6. [l] Ps. cxxxviii. 6.

who hath made us all Members of one, that is, his own, Body: and whose Rule it is, *Whosoever will be great among you, let him be your Minister; and whosoever will be chief among you, let him be your Servant: even as the Son of Man came, not to be ministered unto, but to minister, and to give his Life a Ransom for many* [m]. The same Lesson, of not disdaining the very meanest Offices of Kindness, one to another, when Occasion requires them, he taught his Apostles, and through them all his Followers, in a Manner so unspeakably engaging, just before his Death, as one of the farewell Demonstrations of his tender Affection to them; (for so the Evangelist puts it;) conveying his Meaning the more expressively, as the Eastern Custom was, by an outward Action, peculiarly fitted to exemplify it: that I shall read you almost the whole Passage, as the best Conclusion, that can be made to a Discourse on the present Subject.

Now before the Feast of the Passover, when Jesus knew, that his Hour was come, that he should depart out of this World unto the Father: having loved his own, which were in the World, he loved them unto the End. And Supper being

[m] Matth. xx. 26, 27, 28.

ended, he laid aside his Garments, and took a Towel and girded himself. After that, he poureth Water into a Bason, and began to wash the Disciples Feet, and to wipe them with the Towel, wherewith he was girded. And after he had taken his Garments, and was sat down again, he said unto them, Know ye, what I have done unto you? Ye call me Master and Lord, and ye say well: for so I am. If I then, your Lord and Master, have washed your Feet, Ye ought also to wash one another's Feet: for I have given you an Example, that ye should do, as I have done unto you. Verily, verily, I say unto you, the Servant is not greater than his Lord: neither He that is sent, greater than He that sent him. If ye know these Things, happy are ye, if ye do them [n].

[n] John xiii. 1—17.

SERMON VI.

PSALM XC. 12.

So teach us to number our Days, that we may apply our Hearts unto Wiſdom.

THERE are not many Subjects recommended ſo often from the Pulpit to your ſerious Conſideration, as the Shortneſs and Uncertainty of human Life: indeed there are very few, that deſerve it ſo well. For our Buſineſs is, not to entertain the Curioſity of our Hearers with learned Diſcoveries, refined Speculations, or uncommon Remarks; but to remind them continually of ſuch Truths, as are moſt uſeful to direct their Practice by mending their Hearts. And how impoſſible ſoever it may appear, that any one ſhould be ignorant of ſome of them, yet if Men will forget

forget or neglect them, and live as if they knew them not, they muſt be ſtill repeated and inculcated. The Wiſdom of our gracious Maker hath provided, that the greateſt Part, not only of our Duties, but of the Motives to perform them, ſhall naturally and frequently ſuggeſt themſelves to our Minds. And amongſt the latter, one ſhould think there was none more obvious, more unavoidable, than the Conſideration of our own Mortality. But as thoſe Objects which are continually preſent to our Senſes, are apt for that Reaſon ſcarcely to affect us more, than if they were abſent: ſo this Truth, being familiarized to us by daily Examples, about which we are indifferent, makes almoſt as little Impreſſion upon us, as if the Caſe were otherwiſe. It is a Fact, which we have no Doubt of, and no Pleaſure in: we therefore turn our Thoughts to ſomewhat elſe with ſuch unhappy Succeſs, that, though the Conſequences of it are the moſt intereſting to us all, that poſſibly can be, Multitudes of us live, as if we neither believed nor ſuſpected any Thing of the Matter. When indeed the Voice of Exhortation, or the unexpected Deceaſe of a Friend or Acquaintance, forces us to attend, we acknowledge for that Moment,

and

and perhaps with ſome Concern, that we muſt expect to die ſoon: but quickly proceed again to act, as if we hoped to live for ever. And therefore it was a wiſe Prayer of *Moſes*, that God would condeſcend to help our Infirmity in this important Point. *So teach us to number our Days, that we may apply our Hearts to Wiſdom.* Or, as the Words may be tranſlated, without any material Change in the Senſe: *Teach us to number our Days thus*; to count them, as the preceding Part of the Pſalm had done, like the *Sleep* of a Night, *like the Graſs, which in the Morning flouriſheth, but by the Evening is cut down and withered:* or again, *Teach us to number our Days aright; and we will bring*, that is, in order to learn, or, *we ſhall acquire, an Heart of Wiſdom.*

The Expreſſion of *numbering our Days* carries in it an Implication, that they are not many. For in Scripture, as being *without Number* denotes a large Multitude[a], ſo the contrary Phraſe hath of courſe the contrary Signification. Thus, when *Moſes* mentions the Continuance of the Cloud only a few Days upon the Tabernacle, it is in the Hebrew, *Days of Num-*

[a] Gen. xli. 49. Numb. xxiii. 10. Judges vi. 5. vii. 12. 1 Kings iii. 8. Job v. 9. ix. 10. xxxiv. 24. Eccl. i. 15.

ber.

ber[b]. When he threatens, *The Lord shall scatter you amongst the Nations, and ye shall be left few in Number*, it is again, only *Men of Number*[c]. And when *Belshazzar* is told, that *God hath numbered his Kingdom*[d], the Meaning is, that its Conclusion was near at Hand. Yet we cannot say, that Life is too short for us to enjoy the proper Happiness of it. For in our present fallen Condition, all Things considered, we have much Reason to be contented, nay thankful, that the Duration of Man upon Earth is no longer; and should have sufficient Cause to be weary of it, if it were. For surely *threescore Years and ten* is full Space enough to be Spectators of, and Sharers in, the Follies, the Sins, the Sufferings, of such a World as this. And both they who are *so strong, that they come to fourscore Years*, experience a peculiar Degree of *Labour and Sorrow*[e]: and they that, after *walking with God, are taken by him*[f] ever so early, ought to be considered as *taken away* in Mercy *from Evil*[g] of one Kind or another. Nor is Life too short for the Business we have to do in it. For God requires, in this and all Respects, only in Proportion to what he gives.

[b] Numb. ix. 20. [c] Deut. iv. 27. [d] Dan. v. 26.
[e] Ps. xc. 10. [f] Gen. v. 24. [g] If. lvii. 1.

And we ſhould every one of us eaſily do the whole that is needful here, would we but reflect what it is, and ſet about it in Earneſt: which they that will not, when the Hours allotted them are ſo few, would be leſs likely ſtill, if they had more to trifle away. But there yet remains a Senſe, in which we all feel and own the Shortneſs of Life, when it is too late, if not before: that is, we find it waſte much quicker, than we imagined: not only becauſe we ſeldom attain to live near ſo many Years as we flatter ourſelves; but becauſe the utmoſt Extent to which we can live, doth not allow ſuch a Multitude of Things to be done in it, as ſome fancy and imprudently attempt, nor afford Room for ſuch Waſte and Negligence, or ſuch a Series of Errors and wrong Steps, as others adventure upon. And this being ſo evident and intereſting a Truth; the ſerious and frequent Conſideration of what it forbids, and what it calls for, muſt powerfully contribute to produce both a Temper and a Conduct of true Wiſdom.

But to this end, we ſhould place before our Eyes two diſtinct Views of our Exiſtence here: as it regards the preſent World, and as it is alſo a State of Preparation for a future. At preſent

I shall dwell chiefly on the former View: which, though it be a very confined and imperfect one, yet was of so great Use to the Good and Virtuous under the Old Testament, when the World to come was less clearly revealed, that it ought not to be slighted now. And it visibly hath this Advantage, that whatever is rightly inferred from it, must be universally confessed: because, let Men bring themselves to think ever so little, or doubt ever so much, concerning the next Life, they cannot doubt, but that which now is, will soon, and they know not how soon, come to its Conclusion: from which Truth alone, if they reflect on it duly, they will not fail to learn important Lessons of moral, and even pious, (which will thus appear to be wise,) Behaviour. *As of the green Leaves on a thick Tree*, saith the Son of *Sirach*, *some fall and some grow, so is the Generation of Flesh and Blood: One cometh to an end, and another is born. Every Work rotteth and consumeth away, and the Worker thereof shall go withal. Blessed is the Man that doth meditate good Things in Wisdom, and that reasoneth of holy Things by his Understanding*[h].

[h] Ecclus xiv. 18, 19, 20.

1. First

1. First then, as all Virtues in general, both by their own proper Influence, and the Blessing of God, which Reason leads us to expect, and Scripture expresly assures us of, conduce to prolong our Days; the Consideration of their natural Brevity may well direct us to a virtuous Conduct: particularly to Sobriety, Temperance, and Chastity; to a prudent Moderation of Anger; and to whatever Duties have especially the Promise or the Prospect of long Life annexed to them. For nothing can be more absurd, than to contract into a yet narrower Compass what is so far from needing it: unless it be, Complaining against Providence, that human Life is of so small Continuance, when ours might be of much greater, if we would: nay, when perhaps, at the very Moment of our Complaint, we are taking all the Pains we can not to live out one half of the few Days, that are appointed to Man upon Earth; and, in those we do live, to make ourselves miserable and fit for nothing; hastening Old-Age before its Season, and loading it with Diseases, by an idle, luxurious and libertine Youth.

2. Since we have but a small Time to stay here, it is our Wisdom to make it as easy and agreeable to ourselves and all with whom we

have any Intercourſe, as we are able: and to imitate Perſons of Prudence, who occaſionally go Journies together: bearing with each others Temper and Behaviour, giving mutual Comfort and Aſſiſtance under the Misfortunes and Inconveniences of the Way, and continually endeavouring to preſerve or reſtore the good Humour and Cheerfulneſs of the Company. By this Method, we might live much more in a few Years, that is, have a greater Feeling of the Bleſſings of Life, than by being reciprocally troubleſome and vexatious, we can in ever ſo many. And ſurely it is very ſtrange, that having ſo ſcanty a Share of Being allotted us here, and this expoſed by Nature to ſuch Multitudes of unavoidable Troubles and Sufferings, we ſhould contrive to pour additional Bitterneſs into our common Cup, by needleſs Injuries and Provocations. At beſt we have no Happineſs to ſpare: and therefore ſhould rather ſtudy to increaſe our Portion, by Friendlineſs and kind Offices, which will of courſe invite a Return of them, than leſſen it by Selfiſhneſs, Haughtineſs, Reſentment, Perverſeneſs, unſeaſonable Intermeddling; Qualities, moſt of them uneaſy in themſelves, and all of them productive of numberleſs Uneaſineſſes with every

every body around us. Or how little ſoever we may regard our own Tranquillity, or how well ſoever we may hope to maintain it, in the midſt of Diſputes and Contentions: yet, as moſt Perſons are differently affected by ſuch Things, ſurely the Condition of Humanity in general ought to move Compaſſion in us, and we ſhould permit the little, which our poor Fellow-Creatures enjoy of Good, to be enjoyed, while it laſts, in Peace. We might image to ourſelves, methinks, thoſe who ſuffer by us, complaining and pleading, in Language like that of *Job: Man, that is born of a Woman, is of few Days and full of Trouble. He cometh forth like a Flower, and is cut down: he fleeth alſo as a Shadow, and continueth not. And doſt thou open thine Eyes upon ſuch an one, and bringeſt me into Judgement with thee?——Seeing his Days are determined——his Bounds appointed, that he cannot paſs; turn from him, that he may reſt, till he ſhall accompliſh, as an hireling, his Day**. *Are not my Days few? Ceaſe then, and let me alone, that I may take Comfort a little, before I go whence I ſhall not return, even to the Land of Darkneſs, and the Shadow of Death*‡.

* Job xiv. 1, 2, 3, 5, 6. ‡ Job x. 20, 21.

3. The Shortneſs of Life ſhould teach us to be ſpeedy and diligent in doing all ſuch Things, as we ought to do. What theſe are indeed, it doth not alone ſufficiently ſhew. But they are moſt of them ſo plain, and the reſt ſo conſtantly taught us, that almoſt every one deſigns to practiſe them ſooner or later, and become extremely good before he dies. But then they perpetually defer and poſtpone the Time of beginning this Reformation, on frivolous Pretences; and never conſider to any Effect, how their Life is paſſing away, and gliding from under them, in a Courſe of Actions, which they own is faulty, and will at laſt lament in vain. They think, they may throw away a great Deal of it; and have Plenty left, to act as they judge proper afterwards. Now were it to laſt ever ſo long, yet ſpending any Part of it amiſs, either wilfully or thoughtleſsly, would be very unwiſe. But conſidering how ſhort both others, and we ourſelves, as far as our Experience reaches, have always found it; to ſquander what with our beſt Management is but enough, and what poſſibly may not hold out another Day, is Folly beyond Expreſſion. Therefore the Son of *Sirach*, concerning one Part of our Duty, Acts of Kindneſs,

advises thus[i]: *Remember, that Death will not be long in coming: and that the Covenant of the Grave is not shewed unto thee. Do good unto thy Friend before thou die, and according to thy Ability stretch out thy Hand, and give him.* But long before that, *Solomon* had established the same Rule, on the same Foundation, concerning all other Parts: *Whatsoever thy Hand findeth to do, do it with thy Might: for there is no Work, nor Device, nor Knowledge, nor Wisdom in the Grave, whither thou goest*[k]. If then we are guilty of any Sin, or liable to any smaller Blemish, let us instantly amend, lest we should never have an Opportunity: or at best should leave a Doubt, whether we forsook our Faults, or they forsook us. If there be any valuable Quality, that we want, and should reckon ourselves happy in the Possession of; let us acquire it as soon as possible, and have the longest Enjoyment of it, that we are able. Whatever we see would be right and fit for us to do, whatever we should be unwilling to go out of the World and leave undone, let us take the only Way to make sure of doing, by doing it without Delay. Every friendly Care, every useful Labour; every Act, by which we can

[i] Ecclus. xiv. 12, 13. [k] Eccl. ix. 10.

either provide properly for those who immediately belong to us, or benefit any other of our Fellow-Creatures, let us apply to it directly: *and work the Works of Him that sent us, while it is Day: for the Night cometh, when no Man can work* [l].

4 Another Point of Wisdom, which the Shortness and Precariousness of our present State of Being should teach us, is to avoid long Pursuits of worldly Profits or Pre-eminences; which probably either we shall not have Time to attain, or must soon quit. Indeed, were the Extent of Man's Life ever so great, it would be but a poor Employment of it to fix our Hearts on gaining more Wealth, more Power and Influence, or higher Rank, than would do us good; to neglect worthier Attentions, and disquiet ourselves and our Neighbours with these. But for a Creature, whose Days *fly away as a Dream when one awaketh* [m], to have an endless Train of selfish Designs, and Schemes laid up for many Years, when perhaps *this Night his Soul* may *be required of him* [n], is monstrously unsuitable. And yet, I know not how it is, the nearer People are to their End, the more eager they commonly are to get what

[l] John ix. 4. [m] Job xx. 8. Ps. lxxiii, 20. [n] Luke xii. 20.

they,

they, of all the World, have the leaſt Occaſion for, and the leaſt Excuſe for being ſolicitous about; and inſtead of that Eaſe and Repoſe, which their Time of Day calls for, unnaturally force themſelves to Labour and Fatigue of Body and Mind, when they can ill ſupport either; till, in the Midſt of this prepoſterous Vehemence and Buſtle, they are ſwept on a ſudden into another State, with Heads and Hearts full of nothing but this. But though the Abſurdity of ſuch immoderate Attachments is moſt palpable, when Perſons are upon the Verge of Life; yet, in every Part of it, the Imprudence of forming diſtant Expectations and Deſigns, and having no reaſonable Proſpect of their Accompliſhment, or at leaſt of Benefit from them, is both very real and too frequent. We have all a great deal to do in amending our Ways, and rectifying our Tempers, on which our Happineſs even here depends, and we ſcarce ever think of it: whereas we need but a very ſmall Share of temporal Advantages to carry us on comfortably to our Journey's End, and yet we ſet our Minds almoſt wholly on increaſing it; many by Injuſtice, others by hard-hearted Penurioufneſs, or ſinfully anxious Care; the former unmindful of

the Prophet's Warning, *He that getteth Riches, and not by Right, shall leave them,* perhaps *in the Middle of his Days; and,* whenever he leaves them, *at his End shall be a Fool*[o]: the latter, equally regardless of the Psalmist's beautiful Reflexion: *Behold thou hast made my Days as it were a Span long, and mine Age is even as nothing before thee: and verily every Man living is altogether Vanity. Man walketh in a vain Shew, and disquieteth himself in vain: he heapeth up Riches, and cannot tell, who shall gather them*[p]. Reasonable Industry, to procure what is requisite for us in our Station, and for those with whom we are intrusted, far from being blameable, is a Duty. But, when they, who have no Families, are as earnest in hoarding, as if they had ever so large ones, only to dispose of their Wealth they hardly know or care to whom, and sometimes have not the Heart to dispose of it at all: or when they, who *have* Families, make it their Business to scrape together for them what will probably do them no real Service, but only be a *Temptation and a Snare*[q] to them; when they grudge to relieve the Necessitous and Miserable, can think of nothing

[o] Jer. xvii. 11. [p] Ps. xxxix. 5, 6. [q] 1 Tim. vi. 9.

with

with Pleaſure, but accumulating ſtill more, and are unable to ſay themſelves, how much they would have: ſuch a Temper and Behaviour is utterly unfit for ſo ſhort-lived and frail a Being as Man. *Having therefore Food and Rayment*, that is, a competent Proviſion of Neceſſaries for ourſelves and ours, *let us be therewith content: for we brought nothing into this World, and it is certain we can carry nothing out*[r].

5. A fifth Uſe of numbering our Days is, to check and compoſe all ſtrong Emotions of Mind about worldly Concerns: for in ſo tranſitory a State there can be nothing to deſerve them. Why ſhould we be elated with Hope of future Good, when both our own Lives, and theirs on whom our Expectations may depend, are ſubject to ſuch innumerable Chances; and the higher we raiſe ourſelves in Imagination, the more afflicting will be our Fall? *Put not your Truſt*, ſaith the Pſalmiſt, *in the Son of Man, in whom there is no Help. His Breath goeth forth, he returneth to his Earth: in that very Day his Thoughts periſh*[s]. *Ceaſe ye from Man*, ſaith the Prophet, *whoſe Breath is in his Noſtrils: for wherein is he to be*

[r] 1 Tim. vi. 8, 7. [s] Pſ. cxlvi. 3, 4.

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accounted of [t]? Why again ſhould we be dejected with Fear of future Evils, when a thouſand Accidents, which none of us can gueſs at beforehand, may prevent their coming; or if they do come, our Head may be laid low enough before that Time, and far enough out of the Way of feeling them; or even if they ſhould light upon us, a ſhort Life hath no Room in it for long Sufferings? If we are viſited with tormenting or weariſome Diſeaſes, the harder they preſs us, the more ſpeedily for the moſt Part they will work our Deliverance, and bring us to that Place, where *there ſhall be no Sorrow nor Crying, neither ſhall there be any more Pain* [u]. If we loſe our beſt Friends, it was at moſt but a very few Years that we could have enjoyed them. If we ſuffer Vexations from our Enemies, Croſſes in our Affairs, all will ſoon be over, and we ſhall be ſecurely ſituated, *where the Wicked ceaſe from troubling, and where the Weary be at Reſt* [x]. If others obtain the Honours, the Profits, the Gratifications, we wiſhed for, there is little Cauſe to envy them ſo periſhable a Diſtinction. If we obtain them ourſelves, there is as little Cauſe for Exultation or Pride while we have them,

[t] Iſ. ii. 22. [u] Rev. xxi. 4. [x] Job iii. 17.

or Indignation or Surprize, when he, who gave for a Time, takes away, or permits any one else to take away, what Death is hourly hastening towards us to carry off irrecoverably. The various Passions belonging to our Nature were interwoven in it, to set us on pursuing Good and avoiding Evil, where it would prove to any Purpose; for which End a moderate Exercise of them serves best: and the Spirit of contented Resignation, (of which there is plainly a Principle in Man, if he would but use it,) was appointed for our Relief, and a great one we should find it, where we can relieve ourselves no other Way. In so uncertain a State, Vehemence of Temper is sure Misery, and in *Patience* alone can we *possess our Souls* [y]. A quiet and meek Submission therefore to whatever may happen, without indulging Hope or Fear, Joy or Sorrow, Anger or Dissatisfaction, is evidently the Frame of Mind, which our Mortality requires. Or to express it in the Words of St. Paul: *This I say, Brethren, the Time is short. It remaineth that they that weep be as though they wept not; and they that rejoice, as though they rejoiced not; and they that buy, as though they possessed not;*

[y] Luke xxi. 19.

and they that use this World, as though they used it not: for the Fashion of this World passeth away [z].

It is true, calming our Agitations by the Prospect of Death, may be thought by some to be curing a less Evil by introducing a greater, which is left without Cure. But indeed viewing it often and steadily will diminish its Terrors, (which unless we look beyond it, are chiefly imaginary,) as it doth those of every thing else in this World. Viewing it as the Will of God, will oblige us in Duty to submit to it contentedly, *remembering them that have been before us, and that come after: for this is the Sentence of the Lord upon all Flesh; and why are we against the Pleasure of the Most High* [a]*?* Then viewing it also as a Relief, though not of the most desirable Kind, must contribute to reconcile many to it something farther, and on the whole pretty well. For though *bitter is the Remembrance of Death to a Man that liveth at Rest, and hath Prosperity in all Things, yet justly acceptable is it to the Needy, and to him whose Strength faileth, and that is vexed with all Things* [b]. Yet still, it must be owned, this Consolation is but a melancholy

[z] 1 Cor. vii. 29, 30, 31. [a] Ecclus. xli. 3, 4. [b] Ibid. ver. 1, 2.

one.

one. And therefore, God be thanked, though Numbers of pious Men in ancient Days had probably no very clear Knowledge of any other, yet he hath enabled us, chiefly indeed by Revelation, yet partly by Reaſon itſelf, to ſee diſtinctly what they did not. And accordingly I muſt add,

Sixthly, and laſtly, That the moſt important Leſſon, taught us by the Shortneſs and Uncertainty of our preſent Life, conſidered in itſelf, is, that we may reaſonably expect, and ſhould therefore continually look forward to another. The longeſt Term at which we can arrive here, and the utmoſt Uſe we can make of it, is ſo very a Trifle and Nothing, compared with the Capacity for Improvement, both intellectual and moral, which we Experience ourſelves to have; that, according to the moſt probable Judgement we are capable of forming, there muſt be ſomewhat farther, and unſpeakably better, deſigned and reſerved for us by our wiſe and bountiful Creator: ſome other Scene of Exiſtence opened, when this is cloſed, in which we ſhall grow up to our Maturity; and manifeſt and rejoice in thoſe Perfections of our Nature, which are hid and buried at preſent, in all to a great Degree, in

some almost intirely. That a Being, qualified for so much, should have Space allowed it for so little, would appear an evident Impropriety and Disproportion: which cannot be justly charged upon any Part of the Works of God. And the more we consider, what Numbers are cut off prematurely in their tender Youth, or just when their Faculties are beginning to ripen; but especially, with what strange Inequality, and Unsuitableness to the Behaviour of Men, both Prosperity and Adversity are distributed amongst them by the confessedly unerring Hand of Providence; the stronger the Argument grows, that this cannot be All: that the View of Life, which we have been taking hitherto, is a poor and narrow one indeed: that another of infinitely greater Moment is to follow it, in which every Thing wanting here shall be supplied, and every Thing wrong set right But, convincing and interesting as these Deductions of Reason are, nothing is able to *bring Life and Immortality into* full *Light*, much less to assure impenitent Sinners of everlasting Punishment, and penitent Believers of eternal Rewards, but the Gospel of *Jesus Christ*[c]. This therefore must be always the principal Object

[c] 2 Tim. i. 10.

of

of our Attention: and This, through God's Grace, to be obtained by its Means, will teach us, what elſe we cannot learn effectually and practically, to think of this our mortal State, as a ſhort and precious Opportunity given us to prepare for another and an endleſs one; the Happineſs or Miſery of which is to depend on the Affections cultivated, and the Deeds done by us, while in the Body. Were the Life which we now live, imagined to be the Whole, Multitudes would argue, plauſibly though unjuſtly, that it could be no great Matter, how they ſpent it; whether they acted virtuouſly or viciouſly, diſcreetly or indiſcreetly: ſince *one Event happeneth to all; and the wiſe Man dieth as the Fool*[d]. But our Share in the Recompences of that, which is to come, cannot poſſibly be regarded as a ſlight Thing. If then we are to be bleſſed or wretched for ever, accordingly as we behave well or ill in the mean while, this makes our Conduct a ſerious Point beyond Expreſſion; and draws moſt affecting Conſequences after it; ſuch as the weakeſt Perſon muſt ſee, and the moſt artful can raiſe no Objection againſt: that the Pleaſures and Profits of Sin are never to allure us, nor the

[d] Eccl. ii. 14, 16.

Difficulties and Afflictions of Virtue to deter us in the leaſt, but both in Compariſon to be looked on, as if they were not: that the Enjoyments of the preſent State are to be uſed with cautious Moderation, and the Burdens of it to be borne with cheerful Hope: in ſhort; that we are to *walk by Faith, not by Sight*[e]: applying indeed to worldly Buſineſs, as far as our Stations require; and partaking of worldly Comforts, as far as will excite our Thankfulneſs to God for them, and anſwer the Purpoſes intended by them; yet ſtill ſetting our Affections principally, not on the Attainment of tranſitory Accommodations or Amuſements, during our Journey; but on ſecuring, by a diligent Performance of the Work, for which we were ſent upon it, a joyful Entrance into our *continuing City*[f]: which God of his infinite Mercy grant us, through *&c.*

[e] 2 Cor. v. 7. [f] Heb. xiii. 14.

SERMON VII.

PSALM XC. 12.

So teach us to number our Days, that we may apply our Hearts unto Wiſdom.

FROM theſe Words I have propoſed to treat of the Wiſdom, the Inſtruction in Piety and Virtue, which may be learned from the Shortneſs and uncertain Duration of human Life; conſidered,

I. With reſpect to the preſent Scene of Things only:

II. To that eternal one, which is to follow.

Even the former of theſe Views, though extremely and eſſentially imperfect, yet affords, as I have ſhewn you, many important Leſſons and Directions: that by Sobriety, Temperance, Chaſtity, and due Government of all our Paſſions, we ſhould endeavour to prolong the

 Space

Space allotted us here; that we ſhould uſe every proper Method of making it as eaſy and comfortable to one another, as we can; that we ſhould be diligent to improve our little Time to the beſt Purpoſes, and do quickly what we would not leave undone; that we ſhould proportion our Deſires of Riches and Honours and Power, and every worldly Good, to the ſcanty Term which we have for the Acquiſition and Enjoyment of them; that we ſhould moderate our Emotions of Joy and Grief, of Hope and Fear and Anger; Vehemence in any of them being plainly unſuitable to a Condition ſo tranſitory; and laſtly, that from the low Attainments of our earthly State, and the ſhort Continuance and unequal Diſtribution of its Bleſſings, we ſhould be raiſed to the Belief and earneſt Expectation of a better.

Very different Concluſions, I am ſenſible, and very bad ones, have been often drawn from the ſmall Number of our Days: of which, beſides many Inſtances in the looſer Heathen Writers, we have ſo diſtinct and beautiful an Account in the ſecond Chapter of *the Book of Wiſdom*, that I ſhall repeat it, and make ſome Remarks on it, before I go further.

The Ungodly said, reasoning with themselves, but not aright, Our Life is short and tedious: and in the Death of Man there is no Remedy, neither was there any Man known to have returned from the Grave. For we are born at all Adventures, and we shall be hereafter, as though we had never been—Our Time is a very Shadow, that passeth away: and after our End there is no returning. Come on therefore, let us enjoy the good Things that are present; and speedily use the Creatures, like as in Youth. Let us fill ourselves with costly Wine and Perfumes, and let no Flower of the Spring pass by us: let us crown ourselves with Rose-buds, before they be withered. Let none of us go without his Part of our Voluptuousness: let us leave Tokens of our Joyfulness in every Place: for this is our Portion, and our Lot is this. Let us oppress the poor righteous Man: let us not spare the Widow, nor reverence the ancient grey Hairs of the Aged. Let our Strength be the Law of Justice: for that, which is feeble, is found to be nothing worth[a].

Now it is certainly to be expected, that if this Life were to be our All, we should each make the best Advantage of it, that we could. But then the Way to do so is a very different

[a] Wisd. ii. 1—12.

one from that, which *the Ungodly, reasoning with themselves, but not aright,* propose. Thoughtless Gayety and dissolute Pleasures, how inviting soever the Description of them may sound, bring Persons daily, and often with surprizing Suddenness, into Distresses and Sufferings of various Kinds; which, destroying their Reputations, their Fortunes, their Healths, will give them much more Cause to complain of the Shortness, and yet Tediousness of Life, than they had when they first attempted to palliate this Evil by such fatal Remedies. For Vice and Folly have the unhappy Secret of reconciling this seeming Contradiction, by lessening the Extent of our Days, and at the same Time increasing the Burthen of them.

But supposing that such Miseries could be avoided, human Nature is not fitted for a perpetual Hurry of Amusements and Extravagances; nor, without a very painful Force upon itself, can bear them: but all Excesses of this Kind are severely punished, sooner or later, by that Lowness and Dejection, which fails not to follow wrong Indulgences; and yet more severely by that moral Principle which is deeply rooted in our Hearts, that Voice within, which will have its Turn to be heard,

as indeed it ought to be heard always. They therefore are the happy Perſons, not that can ſpend the moſt Hours in Forgetfulneſs of themſelves, in idle and unwiſe and perhaps criminal Gratifications; but who can delight to be their own Companions; can enjoy the calmer and ſtiller, but much more inward and real Pleaſure, of a ſerene and compoſed Mind, of a worthy and benevolent and thankfully pious Heart; who are able to look back without Shame, and forwards without Fear. Theſe are the Satisfactions of a reaſonable Being; which as they, who have once fully experienced them, have always declared to be the higheſt poſſible; ſo they, who have not, ſhould, in all Fairneſs and common Diſcretion, make due Trial of them, before they reject them. And upon ſuch Trial they would find that Man is not a Creature formed to diſſipate himſelf in trifling Levity, much leſs to wallow in Debauchery and Brutiſhneſs; but hath the Seeds of ſomewhat noble and divine planted in his Breaſt; which his great Concern is to cultivate, improve and exert. They would learn a higher Valuation of themſelves, and feel how juſtly the Son of *Sirach* hath directed: *Glorify thy Soul in Meekneſs, and*

give it Honour according to the Dignity thereof [b].

As to the ſecond Inference, drawn by the Ungodly, which patronizes Oppreſſion and Cruelty: there is ſomething ſo hateful and ſhocking in theſe Enormities; ſo contrary to the Tenderneſs, which is natural to our Hearts, till we wickedly harden them; ſo inconſiſtent with the Welfare and very Being of Society, that no one guilty of ſuch Practices can at all expect, either to be eaſy in himſelf, or ſafe from others. And therefore, though the Intereſts of this Life alone were to be conſidered, no Argument could be rationally urged from the Shortneſs of it, in Favour of any Thing ſo intirely oppoſite to the evident Deſign of Him who placed us here for our Good, as both Voluptuouſneſs and Injuſtice are.

But whatever Concluſions Men may think they can draw from this firſt and imperfect View: yet, when our Life on Earth is contemplated in the ſecond that was propoſed, as a State of Preparation for another and an endleſs one; then neither the Wit, nor almoſt the Folly of Man can make any other than virtuous Inferences from the Shortneſs of it. And

[b] Ecclus. x. 28.

to

to the Want of looking upon it in this Light the Book of Wisdom ascribes principally those profligate Reasonings, which I have been confuting. *Such Things did they imagine, and were deceived; for their own Wickedness blinded them: as for the Mysteries of God, they knew them not; neither hoped they for the Wages of Righteousness, nor discerned a Reward for blameless Souls* [c]. Without this Knowledge it was weak to argue as they did; but with this Knowledge it had been impossible: so important are the Alterations, which it makes in our Case. Indeed it supplies us, in a very great Measure, with three of the chief Things, which we want in our Pilgrimage through the World. These are,

1 Conviction of the Necessity of applying diligently to know and do our Duty.

2. Encouragement to persist in it to the End against Temptation.

3. Support under the Afflictions, to which we are exposed in the mean while.

Now serious and frequent Reflexion, how soon the present State will terminate in one of infinitely more Consequence, is adapted to

[c] Wisd. ii. 21, 22.

be of the utmost Service to us, in each of these Respects, through that Blessing, which God is ready to bestow on our sincere Endeavours used, and Prayers offered up, in the Name of Christ: *for without Him we can do nothing* [d].

1. To keep alive in us a strong Conviction of the Necessity of applying diligently to know and do our Duty.

Were this Life the Whole of our Existence, there would be many, thoughtless enough to imagine, that being so short, there could be no mighty Difference, in what Manner it was spent, right or wrong: for so small a Journey, any Way of undertaking it would serve; and Fancy be Guide sufficient: the Advantages of chusing well could not be exceeding great; the Inconveniences of chusing ill would soon be over, indeed whenever one pleased; and the End of all Things would quickly come, when Prudence and Imprudence would be just upon a Level. But plausible as this may look, when it gratifies the prevailing Humour; surely whoever conceives the present State to be his whole Portion, be it as short as it will, ought to think it deserves his whole Attention; else he may not only miss all the Happiness, that he can

[d] John xv. 5.

pro-

promiſe himſelf, but find there is Room enough for ſuch a one, as he is, to be more than a little miſerable as long as he lives: notwithſtanding which, he will probably wiſh to continue in Being as long as he can.

Yet ſtill, if the Suppoſition, on which theſe Men venture their All, were true; the Harm, which they would ſuffer by conducting themſelves abſurdly would not be ſo extremely pitiable: and they might contrive to make it appear much leſs than it is. For Affectation and Obſtinacy can ſupport ſome, for a time at leaſt, in bearing a great Deal, and calling it a Trifle. But whatever Trifles the Pleaſures and the Pains of this Life may be; the Felicity reſerved for good Perſons in another, and the Puniſhment to be inflicted, (and which our Conſciences tell us will be juſtly inflicted,) on ſuch as have perverted and abuſed their own Natures, injured their Fellow-Creatures, diſobeyed the Commands and defeated the Purpoſes of their Creator; theſe Things muſt be of Moment unſpeakable: and which of them ſhall be our Lot, abſolutely depends on the Uſe we make of the Space allowed us here. How greatly doth it concern us then, carefully and frequently to examine what Share we have *wrought* of

the Works of Him that ſent us; and to recollect, how ſoon *the Night* may and muſt *come, in which no Man can work* [e].

To know the former, we muſt ſearch, through the wide Extent of the divine Law, into our Performances and our Deficiencies: whether we have uniformly expreſſed towards our Maker, our Redeemer, our Sanctifier, that Reverence and Love, that Reſignation and Thankfulneſs, that Hatred of Sin, and Univerſality of Obedience, which their Authority over us, and Goodneſs to us, ſo ſtrongly require: whether, on all Occaſions in common Life, we have been ſo juſt and upright, ſo mild and forgiving, ſo charitable and bountiful, ſo friendly and compaſſionate, ſo faithful and attentive to the various Duties of our ſeveral Stations and Relations, as we know we ought: whether laſtly in the Government of ourſelves we have been ſo obſervant of Purity and Decency, ſo temperate and abſtinent, ſo indifferent about Things below compared with thoſe above, as becomes Beings deſigned to ſuſtain the Character of rational, moral, religious, Chriſtian. If we have not, and moſt certainly we have not, can we truly ſay, that we have

[e] John ix. 4.

repented

repented and thrown ourſelves on God's Mercy in Jeſus Chriſt, and are ſtill in a penitent and believing State? Unleſs this be ſo, the one Thing needful is hitherto undone: and even if it be done, yet how much Employment is there ſtill upon our Hands, to perfect our Humiliation for what is paſt, and undo, as far as we can, all the Evil, that we have ever done, and perhaps have been doing for a long Time, againſt our Fellow-Creatures, as well as in the Sight of God! Not only our external Behaviour, but the inward Principſes of it, muſt be continually reformed: all our bad Inclinations firſt be detected, which is no eaſy Taſk, then gradually ſubdued, which is a very hard one: eſpecially when we have ſuffered them by Indulgence to ſtrengthen their original Hold on our Hearts. They cannot be extirpated in this Life; they will frequently rebell; and yet muſt be always overcome. But this is not the Whole. Further ſtill, every Chriſtian Virtue, every Qualification preſcribed in the Word of God, muſt be planted in our Souls, tenderly cheriſhed, and inceſſantly carried on towards Maturity. For it is only *if theſe Things be in us and abound*, that *an Entrance ſhall be miniſtered unto us abundantly into the everlaſting King-*

Kingdom of our Lord and Saviour [f]. How little we have of ſome of them, how much too little of all, we cannot be totally ignorant. But we ſhall never know, as we ought, and yet leſs be able to ſupply our Defects, unleſs we are both enlightened and ſtrengthened by the Grace of God. Have we then prayed and laboured for this, and have we obtained it, and are we making a proper Uſe of it? Without it our Hope of Amendment is vain: and even with it, ſo much is wanting to be done, that we have by no Means any Time to throw away.

For, alas, what is the Time of Man upon Earth? The Whole of it ſhort: a great Part of it neceſſarily filled up with Things not related, or very remotely, to our main Buſineſs: perhaps, if not certainly, much the greateſt Part already paſt, and irrecoverably gone; ſo paſt, it may be, as to increaſe both our Work and the Difficulties of it, in the Remainder. That Remainder alſo will flie as ſpeedily, and, unleſs we take Care, as unprofitably too, as what preceded. And how ſmall a Remnant it may prove to thoſe, who have ſeemingly the beſt Reaſons for making themſelves large Promiſes, we can never know; amidſt the per-

[f] 2 Pet. i. 8, 11.

petual Accidents, that cut off ſuch great Numbers in the Prime of their Days; and are many of them too ſudden to leave Room, even for that miſerable Comfort, a Death-bed Repentance.

It appears very harſh, and is extremely painful, to give People, in a dangerous Sickneſs, the ſlighteſt Intimation how little this Remedy is likely to avail them. And therefore they ought to be the more frequently and ſtrongly reminded of it, whilſt they may hear it with leſs Terror, and greater Benefit. A preſumptuous or thoughleſs Mortal lives negligently and ſinfully Year after Year, in Hopes of repenting of his Sins, when he comes to the End of his Days: that is, doth a Multitude of ill Actions, in Hopes that hereafter he ſhall heartily wiſh he had never done them. Can this be? Are ſuch Perſons in earneſt? No: but they are trying, if poſſible, to cheat God and themſelves at the ſame time; to diſobey his Will ſo artfully, as to avoid Puniſhment, and obtain Reward. Now what imaginable Proſpect is there, that from a Heart ſo deliberately falſe, any true Repentance will ever come? Beſides, what Certainty is there, that any one will have Time allowed him, or that his Underſtanding

derſtanding will not fail, or that he will not grow hardened inſtead of penitent; or indeed, that he ſhall have Spirits and Attention ſufficient, in the midſt of Pain and Sickneſs and Languor, to recollect his numerous Tranſgreſſions, and to apply earneſtly for Pardon. If he hath, undoubtedly it is the beſt and only Thing, that he can do for himſelf: and omitting it is making a very bad Caſe greatly worſe. But ſtill, to be grieved for our Sins only when we can live no longer in them, and are afraid of being immediately condemned for them, is a very ſuſpicious Kind of Sorrow: and moreover, it is not to mere Sorrow, that God hath promiſed Forgiveneſs, nor to mere Faith; but to ſuch only, as will produce Amendment, for which, in theſe Circumſtances, there is little or no Room. Nor can either By-ſtanders, or the dying Man himſelf, know in the leaſt, whether it would produce any, were a longer Life to be granted: or whether he would not relapſe, as thouſands of others, notwithſtanding the moſt promiſing Appearances, have done, into his former Wickedneſs. And therefore no one can, on ſure Grounds, either adminiſter Comfort to others, or take it to himſelf, in ſuch a Caſe; how dreadful ſoever

it will be to have none in that Hour, when we ſhall want it moſt.

Since therefore our Preparation muſt be made before our End comes; which will come ſoon, and may come when we think of it leaſt: how vigilant ſhould we be not to ſpend any of our Time in Sin; and how unwilling to ſpend more than is neceſſary in Trifles: how ſtudious to make our common Employments in Life conſiſtent with and ſubſervient to our *heavenly Calling*[g]: how careful to be always in Readineſs, to have *our Loins girded and our Lights burning, like Men that wait for their Lord*[h]; *leſt, coming ſuddenly, he find us ſleeping*[i]. How frequently ſhould we imagine ourſelves in the Condition, in which we muſt be ſhortly: when the Pleaſures, the Profits, the Pre-eminences, that we have purſued ſo eagerly, will vaniſh into nothing; when the Duties that we have ſlighted ſo boldly, will appear the moſt important of all Things; and the only firm Support will be, *that in Simplicity and godly Sincerity, by the Grace of God, we have had our Converſation in the World*[k]! Why ſhould we not think now, as we certainly ſhall then?

[g] Heb. iii. 1. [h] Luke xii. 35, 36. [i] Mark xiii. 36. [k] 2 Cor. i. 12.

Why

Why ſhould we not act now, as we ſhall wiſh from the Bottom of our Hearts we had done; and wiſh in vain hereafter for what at preſent is undoubtedly feaſible, and but moderately difficult!

Such Reflexions, as theſe, may be diſagreeable to us: but they will become very ſupportable. God, in great Mercy, hath framed us ſo, that the Conſideration of Mortality, however awful, is not too ſtrong for us. We can look upon it without overpowering our Faculties; and turn our Thoughts from it with Eaſe to the daily Buſineſs and even Amuſements of Life. But it would be a moſt unworthy and pernicious Return, becauſe he doth not force it upon our Minds conſtantly, which would unfit us for this World, therefore to lay it out of them intirely; or ſo near it as to neglect providing for the next. And the more averſe any one is from meditating on theſe Things, the more needful it is for him. Not thinking of Death will ward it off never the longer; but only make it infinitely terrible, when it comes: and thinking of it effectually will bring it never the ſooner; but only diſpoſe us to wait for it in Peace, and receive it with calm Reſignation, if not with Joy. *O that Men were*

wiſe,

wise, that they understood this; that they would consider their latter End[l]!

2. The Shortness of this Life, when we view it as an Introduction to another, besides proving in the strongest Manner the Necessity of Diligence in our Duty, gives also the greatest Encouragement to persevere in it, against all Difficulties and Temptations.

Indeed the Pains, that we take, to lay aside our Faults and cultivate our Virtues, will seldom fail to reward themselves plentifully even here, by *the peaceable Fruits of Righteousness*[m]. But were it commonly otherwise, were the Yoke of our Master heavy and his Burthen grievous; it is not long, that we have to bear it. The Warfare against our Spiritual Enemies, the Sorrow of being too often unsuccessful in it, the Watchfulness over our bad Inclinations, the Painfulness of Self-Denial, the Ridicule and Censure of *a World* that *lieth in Wickedness*[n], all this will soon be past, and we shall *receive the End of our Faith* and Obedience, *the Salvation of our Souls*[o]. If the other Life were very distant, and *the Crown of Glory*[p] not to be given us, till we had been some hundreds

[l] Deut. xxxii. 29. [m] Heb. xii. 11. [n] 1 John v. 19. [o] 1 Pet. i. 9. [p] 1 Pet. v. 4.

of Years, like the ancient Patriarchs, *fighting the good Fight*[q], and *enduring Hardneſs, as good Soldiers of Jeſus Chriſt*[r]; it were leſs Wonder, if *any ſhould grow weary, and faint in their Minds*[s]. But ſince the Days of our Trial are thus few, and eternal Felicity is annexed to ſo ſhort a Struggle; we may cheerfully *hold faſt the Profeſſion of our Faith without wavering, and provoke one another to Love and good Works; and ſo much the more* continually, *as we ſee the Day approaching*[t]. *Be patient therefore, Brethren, unto the Coming of the Lord. Behold, the Huſband-man waiteth for the precious Fruit of the Earth, and hath long Patience for it, until he receive the early and latter Rain. Be ye alſo patient, ſtabliſh your Hearts: for the Coming of the Lord draweth nigh*[u].

And as the Nearneſs of another State leſſens very conſiderably the Difficulties of Virtue; ſo doth it alſo the Advantages of Sin: which indeed are ſeldom real, even here, but much the contrary, were all duly conſidered, whatever bad Men imagine, *whom their own Wickedneſs blinds*[w], as they well deſerve it ſhould. But ſuppoſing them ever ſo often in

[q] 2 Tim. iv. 7. [r] 2 Tim. ii. 3. [s] Heb. xii. 3
[t] Heb. x. 23—25. [u] James v. 7, 8. [w] Wiſd. xi. 21.

the

the right, the utmoſt Benefit they can receive is but for the preſent Life, it may be, for a very ſmall Part of it: and all that we can poſſibly get or loſe, enjoy or ſuffer in this World, bears no Proportion to that which is to come. Indeed whatever muſt have an End, can bear no Proportion to that which hath none. And conſequently, were we to live ever ſo long, provided we were to die at all, there could be no reaſonable Compariſon between our Intereſt in the preſent Life and the future. But when the preſent not only ought in Reaſon to be looked on as nothing, but ſhews itſelf to our very Senſes to be as nothing; when we can ſo eaſily reckon up the few Years it is compoſed of, *the Bounds appointed, which it cannot paſs*[x]: even then to let ourſelves be cheated with it, and the poor falſe Promiſes it makes us; and for theſe to quit the Hopes of an Immortality, juſt ready to be conferred on us, the Bleſſedneſs of which exceeds our Imagination, and will be continually increaſing for ever; this is what nothing, but the melancholy Experience of it, could make one believe was poſſible. But ſo the Fact ſtands. Men give up Eternity in Exchange for a Moment: here

[x] Job xlv. 5.

they will have their Portion, whatſoever ſhall come after. And though they muſt know, would they think at all, that *the Judgement* of the Wicked *lingereth not, and their Damnation doth not ſlumber*[y]; yet either they fly from the Conviction, or they harden themſelves againſt it; and deſperately reſolve, that nothing, but what is preſent, ſhall make any Impreſſion upon them: whereas in juſt Reckoning every thing preſent ſhould be regarded almoſt only as it promotes or obſtructs our Preparation for Futurity. Faithfulneſs to our Duty ſhould be our whole Concern: and what we may ſuffer here by doing it, or gain here by tranſgreſſing it, ſhould be accounted very inſignificant; as we certainly ſhall account it, if once we obtain from God the Skill of *numbering our Days* aright.

3. The laſt Uſe, which I ſhall mention, of conſidering how ſoon this Life will terminate in another, is, that we ſhould ſupport ourſelves with the Proſpect of being happy ſhortly, under all that may afflict us in the mean while.

Indeed, were there to be no future State, the Misfortunes of the preſent would be much

[y] 2 Pet. ii. 3.

the more tolerable for ending ſo ſoon. But ſtill, loſing the Comforts of it would then be loſing our All; and going through it in Miſery would embitter our whole Exiſtence. Now were the Space of it more or leſs, yet being the Whole, we could have nothing to make us Amends for our Diſappointments and Sufferings, or to exalt us above them. Death indeed would free us, earlier or later; and ſo far be a Remedy: but a very gloomy one, were all to end there: ſuch a one as moſt People would think worſe than the Diſeaſe, and be *through Fear of it all their Life-time ſubject to Bondage*[z]. But now, as the Intereſts of this World are only a ſmall Part of our Concern, they deſerve only a ſmall Part of our Conſideration: and as the Concluſion of the preſent Scene is immediately followed by a ſecond, which ſhall never conclude, it furniſhes out to us a Triumph over its own Terrors. *O Death, where is thy Sting? O Grave, where is thy Victory*[a]*?*

Bad Perſons indeed can derive no Comfort from hence: for the End of their worldly Sorrows, is the Beginning of infinitely more dreadful ones. But if we are ſincerely pious and

[z] Heb. ii. 15. [a] 1 Cor. xv. 55.

virtuous, the Croſſes and Troubles, under which we may labour here, the Parting with our Friends, the Provocations of our Enemies, Poverty and Contempt, Sickneſs and Pain, the Weariſomeneſs of old Age, the Feebleneſs of decaying Nature, whatever can be grievous to us, will not only ſoon be ſucceeded by Happineſs; but will increaſe that Happineſs unſpeakably, provided we only bear it with a dutiful Patience for this little Interval. *Now therefore, why diſquieteſt thou thyſelf, ſeeing thou art but a corruptible Man? and why art thou moved, whereas thou art but mortal? and why haſt thou not conſidered the Thing that is to come, rather than that which is preſent*[b]?

We cannot indeed, through the original Weakneſs of our depraved Faculties, be ſo much cheered by theſe Conſiderations, as we have Cauſe; and we ſhould not deſpair upon it: but we may be cheered by them much more, than we are; and we ſhould endeavour it to the utmoſt; aſſuring ourſelves, that in our future State, we ſhall ſmile at recollecting the heavieſt Calamities of this, with much more Contempt, than we always do, in our

[b] 2 Eſdr. vii. 15, 16.

maturer Years, at remembering the petty Afflictions of our Childhood.

Let us resolve then, that we will try to *take* even *joyfully* not only the Losses of this World, *knowing that we have in Heaven a better and an enduring Substance* [c]; but also the *Dissolution of this Tabernacle*, since *when we are uncloathed we shall be cloathed upon with an House eternal, and Mortality be swallowed up of Life* [d]. Let us, under all Pressures, of whatever Kind, *look up, and lift up our Heads: for our Redemption draweth nigh* [e]: and contentedly *wait all the Days of our appointed Time, till our Change come* [f]; never *casting away that Confidence, which hath great Recompense of Reward; for yet a little while, and he that shall come will come, and will not tarry* [g]. These Reflexions let us familiarize to ourselves: and learn from them to fix our Hearts, not on such unworthy Objects, as we are subject to be disappointed about every Moment, whilst we have them; and must at farthest in a few Years undergo the final Disappointment of parting with them for ever: but extend our Ambition to nobler Views; and since we are made for Eternity,

[c] Heb. x. 34. [d] 2 Cor. v. 1——4. [e] Luke xxi. 28.
[f] Job xiv. 14. [g] Heb. x. 35, 37.

become superior both to the Pleasures and the Griefs of Time, that being neither seduced by the one, nor dejected by the other, we may go on with a steady and cheerful Attention to our present Duty, and our approaching Bliss; till the *few and evil Days of our Pilgrimage* [h] being ended, we may have our Consummation in Peace; and be admitted everlasting Inhabitants of that *City, which hath Foundations, whose Builder and Maker is God* [i].

[h] Gen. xlvii. 9.   [i] Heb. xi. 10.

SERMON VIII.

JOHN xv. 26.

But when the Comforter is come, whom I will ſend unto you from the Father, even the Spirit of Truth, which proceedeth from the Father, he ſhall teſtify of me.

THE Bleſſings, which we have received from the Sovereign Lord of all, are either the original ones of Creation and Providence, or the ſuperadded one of Redemption from Sin and Miſery. The former Sort are in ſome Meaſure diſcoverable by Reaſon, but much more fully made known by Revelation; of the latter our whole Knowledge is from Revelation alone. But being through its Means once acquainted with thoſe new Relations, in which God's Mercy to fallen Man hath placed

us,

us, and with the new Obligations, to which they ſubject us; it is no leſs criminal to diſregard this Part of Religion, than the other: ſince not only the Foundation of it in the Truth of Things is equally real, but its Importance to our Happineſs, if poſſible, greater. And the ſeveral Perſons of the Sacred Trinity having manifeſted their Love to us by concurring in our Recovery, and conducting and executing, according to the Diſpoſition of infinite Wiſdom, their ſeveral Shares of that gracious Work; we are conſequently bound to diſtinct Acts of Faith and Duty towards each: the Performance of which, agreeably to the Direction of God's Word, conſtitutes the peculiar Duty of a Chriſtian. Amongſt theſe, the preſent Seaſon leads us to conſider, what Offices the Holy Ghoſt hath condeſcended to execute for our Salvation. And as they conſiſt, partly in teſtifying to us outwardly the Certainty of our Religion, partly in moving us inwardly to be affected by it as we ought, I ſhall diſcourſe now on the former of theſe Points: by laying before you,

I. More generally, the Teſtimony given by the Bleſſed Spirit, in ſucceſſive Ages, to Divine Truths; above all to the Grant of a Saviour to Mankind.

II. In a more particular Manner, that ever-memorable Confirmation, vouchsafed, as on this Day, to the Doctrine of the Gospel, by his descending on the Apostles, and induing them with miraculous Gifts: of which I shall prove the Reality, and draw from it proper Inferences. For it will be useful to put *you in Remembrance of these Things, though ye know them, and be established in the present Truth* [a].

I. First then, I shall lay before you, more generally and briefly, the Testimony given by the Spirit, in successive Ages, to Divine Truths.

Prophecy, as St. *Peter* observes, *came not in old Time by the Will of Man: but holy Men of God spake as they were moved by the Holy Ghost* [b]. Accordingly we find in Multitudes of Places, from the earliest Book of Scripture to the latest, supernatural Impulses and Illuminations ascribed to the Spirit of God [c]: nor can we doubt therefore, but they proceeded from him always, though sometimes it is not expresly affirmed. So that we are to honour the Third

[a] 2 Pet. i. 12. [b] 2 Pet. i. 21.

[c] Gen. vi. 3. xli. 38. Numb. xi. 25, 26. xxiv. 2. 1 Sam. x. 10. 2 Kings ii. 9. &c. 1 Chr. xii. 18. 2 Chr. xv. 1. Neh. ix. 30. Ezek. ii. 2. Zech. vii. 12. Rev. i. 10. ii. 7. iv. 2. &c.

Person

Person as the immediate inward Instructor of Men from the Foundation of the World: as Him, who hath admonished, reproved and striven with the Wicked; who hath warmed and cheered the Hearts of the Pious in all Times, with Manifestations of God's Will, with Declarations of his Favour, with Precautions against unseen Dangers, with Promises of Deliverance from the heaviest Afflictions, with his Presence and Guidance in the most intricate Difficulties. But as the principal Demonstration of the Goodness of Heaven was the Purpose of sending our blessed Lord into the World, this most important Dispensation it was the peculiar Care of the Holy Spirit to notify: giving first such darker and less explicit Intimations of it, as however sufficiently answered the Necessities of Mankind, then gradually unfolding and opening the several Particulars of the Scheme; so as that every Generation might be blessed with some new Accession of Light and Comfort beyond the former; and that, by duly-proportioned Intervals, *the Day might dawn, the Day-star arise* [d], then at length *the Sun of Righteousness* [e] shine forth: at which time all the Variety of Types

[d] 2 Pet. i. 19. [e] Mal. iv. 2.

and Prophecies, and all the intricate Steps of Providence through all Ages, ſhould plainly appear to point out and center in this one great Event, and undeniably ſhew, that *known unto the Lord are all his Works from the Beginning* [f].

Now therefore *the Fulneſs of Time being come* [g], and the Circumſtances of Things fitly diſpoſed, the next Operation of the Spirit of God for our Redemption was the ſupernatural Conception of the promiſed Saviour [h]: on whom he afterwards deſcended like a Dove at his Baptiſm [i]; led him into the Wilderneſs to triumph over the Tempter [k]: and ſo conducted the Man *Jeſus* through his whole State of Humiliation, that all he ſaid and did is repreſented in Scripture as proceeding from this Influence: and thoſe mighty Works of his, which bore witneſs of him, are to be conſidered as repeated Teſtimonies of the Spirit on his Behalf. Thus He himſelf hath taught us, laying claim to the Words of *Iſaiah*: *The Spirit of the Lord is upon me: for he hath anointed me to preach the Goſpel to the Poor, he hath ſent me to heal the Broken-hearted, to*

[f] Acts xv. 18. [g] Gal. iv. 4. [h] Matth. i. 18.
[i] Matth iii. 16 [k] Matth. iv. 1.

preach

preach Deliverance to the Captives, and recovering of Sight to the Blind[l]. And again, *If I by the Spirit of God do cast out Devils, then is the Kingdom of God come unto you*[m]. And in like manner St. *Peter*: *That Word, which was published through all Judea, ye know: how God anointed Jesus of Nazareth with the Holy Ghost and with Power: who went about doing Good, and healing all that were oppressed of the Devil: for God was with him*[n]. But, besides the Miracles, which he performed before his Death, the New Testament, according to the common, and I think true Interpretation, ascribes also to the same Divine Agent that great Miracle and Foundation of our Faith, his Rising again; where he is said by St. Paul to have been *declared the Son of God with Power, according to the Spirit of Holiness, by the Resurrection from the Dead*[o]; and by St. *Peter*, to have been *put to Death in the Flesh, but quickened by the Spirit*[p].

Thus then it appears in general, that from the earliest Times *the Spirit of Prophecy was the Testimony of Jesus*[q]: and bore Witness to

[l] Is. lxi. 1. Luke iv. 18. [m] Matth. xii. 28.
[n] Acts x. 37, 38. [o] Rom. i. 4. [p] 1 Pet. iii. 18.
[q] Rev. xix. 10.

his Gospel by continual Signs and Wonders, during his Abode on Earth. I now proceed,

II. To that particular Confirmation of it, by the Descent of the Holy Ghost on his Apostles, which he foretells, in the Text and elsewhere, should follow his leaving the World; and which produced Effects so greatly superior to all preceding Attestations, that the Holy Ghost is said in Scripture not to have been given, or as other Copies read it, not to have been, before[r]: meaning comparatively; and in respect, not of his Existence, but his Operations on Believers.

Now these were reserved, for several good Reasons, till after our Saviour's Ascension. It was prophecied of him, that *when he ascended up on high, he should lead Captivity captive*, subject to Himself Multitudes who had been Slaves to the Wicked one; and, as the Means of doing this, should *receive Gifts for, and give them unto, Men*[s]: which Prediction St. *Paul* expressly quotes[t], and St. *Peter* surely alludes to it, when he saith: *Therefore being by the Right-hand of God exalted, and having received of the Father the Promise of the Holy*

[r] John vii. 39. Comp. Acts xix. 2. [s] Ps. lxviii. 11.
[t] Eph. iv. 8.

Ghost,

Ghost, he hath shed forth this, which ye now see and hear [u]. It was a proper Beginning of the Exercise of that Authority, with which he had been so lately invested: and a new and most seasonable Proof of it, especially to his poor Disciples, who must extremely have wanted Comfort under the Loss of his personal Presence. Now no Comfort could be so reviving, as to find the Tokens of his Power even increased by his Absence; and themselves enlightened with greater Knowledge of Truth, and strengthened with more Ability of performing mighty Deeds, than when *he went in and out amongst them* [w]. Besides, now they were to go immediately on their unparalleled Enterprize, the Conversion of Mankind: and therefore now, and not before, it was Time they should be furnished with the miraculous Qualifications, requisite for that Purpose.

Accordingly, *when the Day of Pentecost*, the tenth after the Ascension, *was fully come*; a Festival, at which Jews and Proselytes of all Countries and Languages resorted to Jerusalem, besides that large Numbers of them usually dwelt there; the Apostles *were all with one Accord in one Place. And suddenly there came a*

[u] Acts ii 33. [w] Acts i. 21.

Sound from Heaven, as of a rushing mighty Wind; and it filled the House where they were sitting. And there appeared unto them cloven Tongues, like as of Fire, and it sat upon each of them. And they were all filled with the Holy Ghost, and began to speak with other Tongues, as the Spirit gave them Utterance [x]. There were it seems, a few inconsiderate Creatures, as the Sort is too common, who found matter of Ridicule in this, and *mocking said, These men are full of new Wine* [y]. But the very Imagination, that twelve serious Men, should, every one of them, be so unaccountably overtaken, at so unlikely an Hour too as Nine in the Morning, was incredible and absurd; as St. *Peter* well observed [z]: whose Speech, made instantly on the Occasion, in the *Words of Truth and Soberness* [a], if ever any was, would alone abundantly have confuted the Charge, even though he had not named it. And yet a farther Confutation was, (and there could not be a stronger) that the Foreigners present must know, whether the Languages they heard were real ones; and the Inhabitants of Jerusalem and Judea must some of them know, whether They, who spoke them, had

[x] Acts ii. 1—4. [y] Ver. 13. [z] Ver. 15.
[a] Acts xxvi. 25.

ever learnt them: and the Refult was, not that they were detected, but that *three thoufand Souls were added to them the fame Day* [b], and the Numbers increafed continually [c].

In this Chapter of the Acts indeed there is Mention only of the fingle Gift of Tongues: as being the moft remarkable in itfelf, and moft immediately exercifed. But from the whole of their Hiftory it appears, that the Apoftles were intrufted, and doubtlefs at the fame time, with various other fupernatural Endowments: as their Lord had promifed them, that they fhould do the fame, *and* even *greater Works* than He, *becaufe he went unto his Father* [d]. And befides the Powers, of which many inferior Difciples partook with them, there was one peculiar to them: that, by Prayer and Impofition of Hands, they were able to communicate the Gifts of fpeaking with Tongues, and performing Miracles, to whom they thought proper. Once indeed, in the extraordinary and new Cafe of *Cornelius, the holy Ghoft fell,* without human Interpofition, *on all which heard the Word* preached [e], as he had done at firft on the Apoftles: that the whole World

[b] Acts ii. 41. [c] Ver. 47. [d] John xiv. 12.
[e] Acts x. 44.

might

might be fully convinced of what the Jews were very backward to believe, that *to the Gentiles also God had granted Repentance unto Life* [f], since he had *given his Spirit to Them, even as he did unto others, putting no Difference between them* [g]. And thus did the Comforter testify, not only the Truth of Christianity in general, but our Title, who are descended from Heathens, to a Share in the Blessings of it: without which Testimony perhaps we had *sat to this day in Darkness and the Shadow of Death* [h]. But still, ordinarily speaking, that the superior Dignity of the Apostles might be preserved, and by its Means the Unity of the Church, and the Purity of the Faith; these Miraculous Gifts were conveyed only through Their Hands, to such Persons, as by Illumination from above, they saw to be qualified for them.

Thus then, to speak in the Terms of St. *Paul, to one* Man *was given by the Spirit the Word of Wisdom, to another the Word of Knowledge, to another Faith, to another the Gifts of Healing, to another the Working of* other *Miracles, to another Prophecy, to another Discerning of Spirits, to another divers Kinds of*

[f] Acts xi. 18. [g] Acts xv. 8, 9. [h] Luke i. 79.

Tongues, to another the Interpretation of Tongues: but all these wrought that one and the self same Spirit, dividing to every Man severally as he willed[i]. And now, imagine a Church of Christians under the Conduct of some of our Lord's immediate Disciples, and exhibiting to the World around them such Gifts as these. Represent to yourselves, first, a number of plain unlearned Men, delivering a Doctrine, perfectly worthy of God, and suited to the Nature and Condition of Mankind; evidently and vastly more so, than all the Discoveries of unassisted Reason, in all Ages, put together, had been able to furnish; professing themselves to have received and been charged to spread it through the Earth, by a Person of a Character absolutely faultless; whose Birth and Actions, and every thing material that befell him, had been gradually foretelling ever since the Creation, and all came to pass accordingly; whom, in farther Confirmation of his Authority, they had seen, for Years, performing daily Miracles of the highest Power, and the tenderest Goodness; whom they had seen supporting the Reality of his Mission by calmly delivering himself up, and suffering Death on the Cross;

[i] 1 Cor. xii. 8—11.

whom

whom yet afterwards they frequently beheld alive and converſed with, till at length while they ſtood by him, a Cloud received him into Heaven: Suppoſing them all to perſiſt unanimouſly in this Account, without any poſſible Intereſt to ſerve by it, and with the hourly Danger of being detected, if what they ſaid was falſe; to have continually before their Eyes, and one after another to undergo, at conſiderable Diſtances of Time, with the utmoſt Cheerfulneſs, every Thing that can be dreadful to human Creatures, merely for aſſerting theſe Facts, and behaving ſuitably to them: ſuch a Teſtimony to ſuch a Religion, muſt ſurely, without any additional Proof, appear throughly convincing to every honeſt and reaſonable Mind. But leſt, after all, it ſhould be thought poſſible, that theſe Witneſſes might either, by ſome ſtrange Means, be all deceived in every one of the abovementioned Evidences; or all agree, (though one ſees not why they ſhould, or how with any Succeſs they could) to deceive others in them: let it be farther ſuppoſed, that from being ignorant and ſlow of Underſtanding, as they notoriouſly were, they now of a ſudden *ſpeak with a Wiſdom and a Spirit*, which their

Adversaries *are not able to resist* [k]; that from being exceedingly timorous Mortals, they are likewise of a sudden, when there is more Ground for Fear than ever, become totally void of Fear, and rejoice to suffer in Defence of their Cause: that being well known neither to have enjoyed Opportunities of Learning in their own Country, nor yet to have travelled out of it; well known to have had, a few Weeks before, no other Dialect, than their native rustic Idiom of Galilee; (which they had not skill enough to disguise, when they would have wished it most, but were betrayed by their Speech, and found out for what they were;) that these, quickly after, are qualified to discourse fluently and properly with Men of all the different Nations of the World, and that *each hears them speak, in their own Tongues, the wonderful Works of God* [l]: that, farther still, they can foretell things future, discern the very Secrets of Men's Hearts, heal Diseases, raise the Dead, inflict miraculous Punishments on their Opposers; in a Word, can work all the Wonders, which they affirm their Master to have wrought; and, which is more, enable others, altogether Strangers to them, immedi-

[k] Acts vi. 10. [l] Acts ii. 8, 11.

ately

ately on their believing, to work the ſame: what can there be wanting to ſatisfy every Examiner completely; and whence can theſe Things proceed, but from the Power of the Divine Spirit?

Now ſuch were the Proofs, on which the firſt Chriſtians aſſert they received their Religion: and their very Reception of it, notwithſtanding ſuch Prejudices of Education againſt it, and threatening Diſcouragements from it, is the ſtrongeſt Preſumption, that the Arguments urged to them were convincing, and their Belief undeniably true. It is an acknowledged Fact, that Chriſtianity ſpread in a very few Years through every Nation then known, and that Multitudes of every Rank embraced it. Now by what poſſible Means could a Faith, ſo intirely oppoſite to the eſtabliſhed Superſtitions of all Countries, and the favourite Vices of all the Inhabitants of them, be thus propagated, in a knowing and inquiſitive Age, by a handful of Men, without Learning and without Power, againſt all the Learning and Power of the World, vigorouſly and without Delay applied to withſtand it, but by ſuch Teſtimonies of the Divine Spirit in its Favour, as the firſt Chriſtians unanimouſly ſay

attended its Progreſs? Theſe afford a clear Explication of this wonderful Change: and fair Inquiry will ſhew, that nothing elſe can. It is eaſy to pick out little Cavils, nay indeed to raiſe very plauſible Objections here and there, againſt the Evidence of any thing. It is eaſier ſtill to get a few general Phraſes, of Enthuſiaſm and Bigotry and Impoſture and Credulity, and throw them about at Random. But let any Unbeliever take only the undoubted Facts, relating to Chriſtianity in its firſt Riſe, and try to ſolve them upon His Principles, entering into Particulars; and he will find it impracticable, not only to give any Account atteſted by Hiſtory, how they did happen, (though that he ought to do) but even any Gueſs or imaginary Suppoſition how they could happen, if our Religion be falſe, that will not be full of infinitely greater Difficulties and Incredibilities, than he can pretend to alledge againſt the Truth of it. And therefore either the Goſpel prevailed by theſe Miracles, for which we contend, or its prevailing without them was the moſt amazing Miracle of all.

But beſides this Way of reaſoning, to prove, that there muſt have been ſuch Gifts, we have direct

direct Historical Evidence, that there actually were such.

Indeed what you have already heard concerning them, from the Acts of the Apostles, carries with it very sufficient Authority. For that Book was the Work of an Author, who lived at the Time, and had Means of being well acquainted with what he relates, and could have no Temptation to write Falsehoods; and was allowed, by those who must know, to have written Truth. But the Argument from St. *Paul's* Epistles appears to be somewhat stronger yet: And the Strength of it lies in this narrow Compass: that they were certainly written by Him; and immediately received, and highly esteemed, by the several Churches to whom they are directed: that in them He mentions frequently the supernatural Gifts of the Spirit, as then subsisting in those Churches; that he would not have dared to do this, had there been no such Thing; or if he had, He and his Letters could never have been respected, as they certainly were.

For the first Point, that these Epistles are really His, we have the strongest external Evidence imaginable: the Testimony of some of his Contemporaries, of many who lived imme-

diately after him, and the universal Consent of Mankind. But the internal Marks and Characters of their being genuine, are, if possible, yet more convincing to a Judge of such Matters. There is an evident Air and Look of Truth and Preciseness preserved throughout them. The Numbers of Persons on various Occasions named in them; the minute Directions and Orders that are sent; the Obscurity of several Passages, occasioned by their referring to Questions asked and Accounts of Things given by the Churches, and to their present Situation, in one respect or another, are manifest Tokens that they are what they profess to be. A Writer of counterfeit Pieces would either be too artful to venture into such Particulars, or must have failed in some of them. But then the Reception of them by the Congregations, to which they are inscribed, completes the Impossibility of a Fraud. Suppose an Impostor to draw up Letters of a considerable Length to such and such Societies, Churches for Instance, relating to many of their Members and Acquaintance, and to many Things, of many Sorts, done, believed, or debated amongst them, and not to make in any one of these a single Mistake, which is quite inconceivable: yet,

when

when theſe Performances came into the Hands of theſe Perſons, pretending in the Title to have been ſent to them or their Fathers, not many Years before, can it be imagined, they will all agree to receive them as ſuch, though 'till then they had neither Original, nor Copy, nor Memory, nor Tradition of them? A falſe Hiſtory may creep ſilently into the World, and obtain Credit by Degrees. A falſe Collection of Letters may impoſe on Strangers, remote in Place or Time: But that the very Men, or Body of Men, to whom they declare themſelves to have been written a little while ago, and who abſolutely know nothing of their ever being written to them at all, ſhould believe in them, is utterly inconceivable: and ſtill more ſo, if theſe Letters affirm ſuch extraordinary Things to be then doing amongſt them, as could not have been forgotten, if they had been done, and yet are not remembered. Now it never was, or can be denied, that St. *Paul's* Epiſtles were admitted as His, and honoured as ſacred, were continually read and quoted both in private and public, by thoſe Churches, of which they bear the Names, not ſome Ages after his Death, for then there might have been Colour for a Charge of Impoſition, but from

his own Days downwards. Nay, if we allow the Teſtimony of early and venerable Writers, his Originals themſelves were preſerved there (a Thing by no Means unlikely) to following Generations.

Now in theſe Epiſtles, thus proved authentic, the miraculous Operations of the Holy Ghoſt appear to have been common amongſt Chriſtians. The Workers of Miracles, they who ſpoke with Tongues, who propheciéd, who had the Gift of Healing, are mentioned there as familiarly as the Apoſtles, Elders and Teachers. Nay farther, as the Exerciſe of ſome of theſe Powers in the Church, it ſeems, was irregular ſometimes, and made Confuſion, there are many Directions laid down by the Apoſtle for the Regulation of it. And farther ſtill, becauſe the Perſons indued with them were too apt to value themſelves, and be valued by others, immoderately on account of them, he inſiſts very much, in the true Spirit of Chriſtianity, on the Preferableneſs of *Charity*, that is, of Love to God and Man, before *ſpeaking with the Tongues of Men and Angels*, before *Prophecy*, before the *Faith that could remove Mountains*[m]. Is it poſſible now, that all this

[m] 1 Cor. xii. 1, 2.

ſhould

should be written to, and received and respected by Persons, who had no such Gifts amongst them? Is it possible also, that St. *Paul*, when, as we find in these very Letters, he had Rivals and Enemies in these Churches, Men of Interest and Influence, of Art and Subtlety, should, in the Face of them all, appeal, as he doth, to Miracles performed by Himself and Others, for a Proof of his Authority and Doctrine, before their Eyes, if in reality neither He, nor any one else, had ever performed any? Observe, how he expostulates with the Galatians on the Danger of their apostatizing from the Gospel to the Law. *O foolish Galatians, who hath bewitched you, that you should not obey the Truth? This only would I learn of you, Received ye the Spirit*, the extraordinary Gifts of the Holy Ghost, *by the Works of the Law, or by the Hearing of Faith? He that ministreth the Spirit to you, and worketh Miracles among you, doth he it by the Works of the Law, or the Hearing of Faith*[n]? Again, he boldly pleads to the Judaizing Roman Converts, those Things *which Christ had wrought by him to make the Gentiles obedient, by Word and Deed, through mighty Signs and Wonders, by the Power of the*

[n] Gal. iii. 1, 2, 5.

Spirit

Spirit of God[o]. And when, amongſt the Corinthians, his Apoſtleſhip had been queſtioned by ſome, his Anſwer is, *Truly the Signs of an Apoſtle were wrought among you in Wonders and mighty Deeds*[p]: And from the Conſciouſneſs which he had of the Aſſiſtance of the Spirit, he threatens to *come to them* again *ſhortly, and know, not the Speech of them, which are puffed up, but the Power. For the Kingdom of God,* he adds, *is not in Word, but in Power*[q]: agreeably to what he had told them in a preceding Chapter; that *his* own *Preaching had not been with inticing Words of Man's Wiſdom, but in Demonſtration of the Spirit and of Power, that their Faith might ſtand, not in the Wiſdom of Men, but in the Power of God*[r]. Now as it muſt be, not only Imprudence, but Madneſs in him, to ſpeak of theſe Things, if they were not true; ſo his ſpeaking of them could not but have produced the intire Rejection of his Epiſtles and Himſelf, if the ſeveral Churches had not known them to be true. And therefore, ſince theſe Churches did continue to reverence Him and Them as of more than human Authority, it follows, that theſe Opera-

[o] Rom. xv. 18, 19. [p] 2 Cor. xii. 12. [q] 1 Cor. iv. 19, 20.
[r] 1 Cor. ii. 4, 5.

tions

tions and Miracles were both real and frequent amongſt all Chriſtians in general. For even when he was congratulating the illuſtrious Church of *Corinth* on her Gifts, he doth not hint to her (many and great as we know they were) that ſhe was before, but only *not behind others* in that Reſpect[a].

And now what remains is, that being ſatisfied of the Certainty of theſe Things, we lay ſeriouſly to Heart the proper Inferences from them; which are indeed too many to be enlarged on at preſent, but happily too plain to need it. In general it follows, that the Religion, which we profeſs, is no other than the Truth of God: the Doctrines of it, however myſterious, reaſonable Objects of firm Belief; the Precepts, however difficult, Matter of indiſpenſable Duty; its glorious Rewards, ſecure to every good Perſon; its dreadful Puniſhments unavoidable by every bad one. More particularly, in Regard to that Spirit, which teſtifies theſe Things, it follows, that we ſhould honour him, as poſſeſſed of thoſe Divine Attributes, which they imply, and which the Scripture aſcribes to him repeatedly; that we ſhould make our thankful Acknowledgements for theſe his out-

[a] 1 Cor. i. 7.

ward Manifestations, and pray for his inward and saving Influences on our Souls; that we should receive the Gospel more submissively, and obey it more diligently, for his having ratified and confirmed it in so unparalleled a Manner; often recollecting for this Purpose that awful Admonition: *If the Word spoken by Angels*, the Law of Moses, *was stedfast, and every Transgression received a just Recompence of Reward; how shall we escape, if we neglect so great Salvation; which at the first began to be spoken by the Lord, and was confirmed unto Us by them that heard him; God also bearing them Witness, both with Signs and Wonders, and with divers Miracles and Gifts of the Holy Ghost*[t]. To whom, with the Father and the Son, &c.

[t] Heb. ii. 2, 3, 4.

SER-

SERMON IX.

JOHN xiv. 15, 16, 17.

If ye love me, keep my Commandments.

And I will pray the Father, and he ſhall give you another Comforter, that he may abide with you for ever:

Even the Spirit of Truth, whom the World cannot receive, becauſe it ſeeth him not, neither knoweth him: but ye know him, for he dwelleth with you, and ſhall be in you.

OUR bleſſed Lord might very poſſibly deſign to comprehend in this Promiſe all the Benefits, which the Holy Ghoſt was to confer on his Followers. But his Expreſſions plainly ſhew, that he had chiefly in view, not the miraculous Gifts of the Spirit, but the directing and comforting Influences of his Grace. For theſe alone are given to all, who *love Chriſt*

 and

and keep his Commandments: These alone were to *abide with Christians for ever:* These alone *the World could not receive*, because they would not suffer themselves to *see* or *know them:* and, though, in Appearance, a less illustrious, they are, in Reality, a more important Gift, than those of Tongues and Miracles. For though the latter were powerful Means of making Religion believed, the former only can bring it to be practised; and therefore it is highly necessary to teach and inculcate the Doctrine of inward Grace; that Men may earnestly pray for it, faithfully use it, and heartily rejoice in it. Some, indeed, have abused the Persuasion of *God's working in them* to a Neglect of *working out their own Salvation*[a]. Some have mistaken the Feelings of an enthusiastic Warmth for Testimonies of the Divine Spirit; some have done extravagant, and others wicked Actions, under Pretence of his Direction. But as their ascribing too much, can never warrant our ascribing too little to his Influence on our Hearts; and Error is best confuted, not by maintaining the opposite Error, but by setting forth the Truth: I shall therefore endeavour,

[a] Phil. ii. 12, 13.

I. To ſhew the Credibility of this Influence from Reaſon:

II. To give a more certain and full Account of it from Scripture:

III. To reconcile it with Experience: And

IV. To make ſuitable Inferences from the Whole.

I. To ſhew its Credibility from Reaſon; which, however needleſs, if Men regarded Scripture as they ought, may be uſeful in diſpoſing them to regard it more than they do.

A little Inſpection into ourſelves will convince us, what imperfect Creatures we are; and how poorly qualified for the Practice of Piety and Virtue. We have indeed, by Nature, a general Knowledge of our Duty, and very juſt Motives to it, with ſome Diſpoſitions in its Favour. But then, on the other Hand, we have much Inattention to religious Truths, and great Prejudices againſt them: we have many bad Inclinations to miſlead us: we have an Indolence that lets them eaſily prevail over us: we are in a World, full of ill Examples and vicious Maxims of Life; of Inticements to unlawful Pleaſures, Provocations to immode-

rate Resentment, Temptations to Ambition, Envy, Covetousness, every Sin. And sometimes a Number of these Enemies are combined together so strongly, and attack us so unprepared, that a much greater Force, than the ordinary Powers of the human Mind, would be very unlikely to stand against them. And when once they overcome us, every Fall makes Way for another; the Sensibility of Conscience decays, good Affections are stifled, wrong Passions inflamed, wrong Customs formed; and Reason, habituated to be over-powered, yields at length without Struggle. Now what is there to be expected, for the future, from Men, unassisted in these Circumstances? It does not follow, indeed, that they will always go on uniformly to Destruction, without some Intervals of better Purposes and Endeavours. From Time to Time their Eyes shall be opened, their Fears alarmed, excellent Resolutions made, and, for a while, persevered in most zealously. But too soon this Fervour cools, our Vigilance abates, a thousand Things happen to put us off our Guard; and one Thing alone, trusting in our own seeming Strength, is sufficient to lull us into a Security, that will prove fatal. Sinful Inclinations and Habits always retain a stronger

ſtronger Party within us, than appears; and when we leaſt think of it, ſnatch a favourable Opportunity and recover their Empire, perhaps more abſolutely than before. After ſome Experience of this Kind, Men come indeed to have leſs Confidence in themſelves. But what is the uſual Conſequence? Why, that not looking beyond themſelves, at the very Time of forming good Purpoſes, they ſcarce hope to keep them; and ſo their Efforts grow daily more heartleſs and faint, till at laſt they become quite weary of the fruitleſs Trouble; and it may be, inſtead of trying any longer to be good, labour to perſuade themſelves, that they neither need nor can be ſo.

This is plainly (aſk your Hearts if it be not) the common Courſe of Things; the daily Event of the Combat, between mere human Virtue, and the Trials, which this World throws in its Way. Yet all the while it is an evident Truth, that the very End of our Being is, the practiſing of theſe Duties, which we find ſo difficult; and the rooting out of theſe Sins to which we feel ourſelves ſo prone. Now what God hath made us for, he muſt ſome Way have provided we ſhould be able to do, in ſuch Meaſure as he will accept. He moſt clearly

ſees the Dangers to which we are expoſed, and the poor Degree of Strength and Preparation, with which we meet them. The never-ceaſing Influences of his Providence preſerve and actuate every Part of the material World. And can we imagine, that He, who is always taking Care of all his other Works, down to the very meaneſt Things on this Earth, will diſregard the moſt important Thing in it, the eternal Intereſts of the Souls of Men? It would be injuring his Goodneſs, his Holineſs, to think ſo.

It is true, Beings endued with free Will and Choice, as we are, muſt not be acted on ſo as to deſtroy it, but ſuitably to their Nature. And how many ſuch Methods may there be within the Reach of infinite Wiſdom and Power? He who hath given us all the inward Principles we have, cannot he, at Pleaſure, repair their Decays, reſtrain their Vehemence, rectify their Diſorders? He, who hath eſtabliſhed the Ways by which his Creatures communicate their Minds one to another, muſt not he be able to communicate himſelf to them, when he judges it proper; to repreſent the Beauty of Goodneſs, the Deformity of Sin; to ſuggeſt proper Motives of Duty and Intereſt; to turn their Attention from dangerous Objects; to in-

ſpire them with religious and virtuous Affections; to bring into their Minds juſt and wiſe Rules of Conduct; and all this at ſuch Times, as ſhall be moſt needful for our Reformation, our Safety, our Improvement? Theſe inviſible Operations of God on our Minds, are plainly no more inconſiſtent with our Liberty, than the ſecret or open Perſuaſions of our Fellow-Mortals are. And therefore it is perfectly credible, that as we, who have ſo little Goodneſs, are prompted by it however to adviſe and aſſiſt each other, He, who is abſolutely good, will not refuſe his gracious Help, in ſuch Caſes as really want it; and eſpecially to ſuch Perſons, as humbly deſire it, and honeſtly make Uſe of it: for careleſs and preſumptuous Sinners have by no Means the ſame Ground to hope for Aid from a juſt and holy God. But to what Degree he will either ſtrengthen the former, or admoniſh the latter, is intirely beyond human Knowledge: only this we know, that he may do what he will with his own; and will do always, what he ſees to be wiſeſt and beſt.

Nor is the Perſuaſion of God's enlightening and aſſiſting Men to perform their Duty, a Notion ſtarted in theſe later Ages of the World; but, from early Times, the beſt and moſt con-

ſiderate, even of the Heathens, have held and taught this Doctrine: and all Men every where implicitly own it, by offering up Prayers to Heaven for Direction, how they ſhould act for Help and Succeſs in their Attempts: of which Prayers the Faith of a divine Interpoſition is the only poſſible Ground. Theſe Things, put together, muſt ſurely, at leaſt, prepare us to receive more readily, and with more intire Confidence in it, that fuller Light, of which I now proceed

II. To give ſome Account from Scripture. There we are taught, that human Nature is corrupt and degenerate, and no longer able to ſtand alone againſt the Temptations which itſelf breeds; and yet leſs when they are ſtrengthened by the Suggeſtions of wicked Men, and of *our Adverſary the Devil, who as a roaring Lion walketh about, ſeeking whom he may devour*[b]: That therefore our Maker, who ſtill requires Obedience from his Creatures, and yet doth not require Impoſſibilities, hath from the Beginning *ſtriven with* the bad[c], and *inſtructed*[d] and *eſtabliſhed*[e] the good, by *his Spirit within them*[f]; though it was more abundantly

[b] 1 Pet. v. 8. [c] Gen. vi. 3. [d] Neh. ix. 20.
[e] Pſ. li. 12. [f] Gen. xli. 38.

poured

poured forth, when the Gospel was published: from which we learn, that *except a Man be born of Water and the Spirit, he cannot enter into the Kingdom of Heaven*[g]: That by *the Spirit of Adoption*[h], changing our Nature and Condition, we are intitled, *through Faith in Christ*, to call God our Father; And that *if we, being evil, know how to give good Gifts unto our Children; much more shall our Father in Heaven give the Holy Spirit to them that ask him*[i]. Now in this Declaration our blessed Redeemer evidently means, not giving his miraculous Powers (which few in Proportion ever had, and perhaps none ever presumed to request for themselves) but his saving Graces; which, to use the preceding Words, *every one, that seeketh, findeth*; and which answer in the spiritual Life, to Bread in the natural. Accordingly St. *Paul*, in the Conclusion of his second Epistle to the Corinthians, prays, that *the Fellowship* or *Communion*, the Communication of the Blessings, *of the Holy Ghost, may be with them all*, as well as *the Grace of our Lord Jesus Christ, and the Love of God*. Certainly this means, not a Benefit peculiar to a few in the primitive Days, but an Influence

[g] John iii. 5. [h] Rom. viii. 15. [i] Luke xi. 13.

from

from the bleſſed Spirit on the Soul, of which every true Believer in every Age might partake.

Thus then the Holy Ghoſt is given to all Chriſtians. And, as we are taught in the ſame Scriptures more particularly, he *opens our Underſtandings*[k] *and Hearts*[l], that we may diſcern our loſt Condition, by Sin original and actual; may attend to the Offers of the Goſpel, and *know the Things that are freely given us of God*[m]. He alſo inclines our Souls, not only to embrace, but *obey the Truth*[n]. Such as comply with his Motions, he *leads*[o] uniformly on to their Maturity in Goodneſs, to *the Meaſure of the Stature of the Fulneſs of Chriſt*[p]. Thoſe who deviate from the right Way, he brings back[q]; by repreſenting, partly the Terrors of Religion, partly the Mercies; *renews them in the Spirit of their Minds*[r], and forms them again to the Image of God. In this Manner he conducts the whole Flock of Chriſt; *helps their Infirmities* in their Devotions, *making Interceſſion within them*[s]; enables them to *profit* by the Ordinances appointed for them[t]; *teaches them* all *Things*, which they

[k] Luke xxiv. 45. [l] Acts xvi. 14. [m] 1 Cor. ii. 12.
[n] 1 Pet. i. 2. 22. [o] Rom. viii. 14. Gal. v. 18.
[p] Eph. iv. 13. [q] Pſ. cxix. 176. [r] Eph. iv. 23.
[s] Rom. viii. 26. [t] 1 Cor. xii. 7.

need

need to know[u]; in every Affliction and Temptation makes *his Grace sufficient for them*[w]: Proportionably as they use these Advantages well, he *fills them with the Fruits of the Spirit*, which are *in all Goodness and Righteousness and Truth*[x]: and thus *is* present *with them*, and *dwells in them* continually more and more, so that they *grow up*, to use the Apostle's Expressions, *into Temples of the Holy Ghost, Habitations of God through the Spirit*[y].

Not that all good Christians have an equal Sense, or equal Share, of this Happiness. For though they must feel, with some Degree of Comfort, the good Dispositions which the Holy Ghost hath wrought in them; yet Fears and Doubts concerning their spiritual State may, at Times especially, prevail: and the best Persons, through mistaken Opinion, or constitutional Lowness of Spirits, think too ill of themselves; as the worst People often think too well, and have lively Perceptions of groundless Confidence. It is not therefore by our inward Enjoyments, but our Obedience, that we are to judge of our Condition. However, generally speaking, in those of confirmed Goodness,

[u] 1 John ii. 20. 27. [w] 2 Cor. xii. 9.
[x] Eph. v. 9. Phil. i. 11. [y] 1 Cor. vi. 19. Eph. ii. 21, 22.

the

the Spirit bears witneſs powerfully *with their Spirit*, makes the Teſtimony of their Conſcience clear and ſtrong, *that they are the Children of God*[z]. And hence ariſes that *Joy in the Holy Ghoſt*[a] the Comforter, which is a Foretaſte of heavenly Happineſs; that Aſſurance of God's Favour, which is called, in Scripture, being *ſealed with the Spirit of Promiſe, the Earneſt of our Inheritance*[b].

And now, having ſeen what Reaſon and Scripture teach in this Matter, it will be Time to enquire,

III. Whether ſad Experience doth not contradict both. For it will be ſaid, Who is there, that feels any other Principle moving within him, than the natural Workings of his own Mind? And it muſt be owned, that the Generality of Men, at leaſt, have no ſuch Perception of any ſecret Impulſes upon them, as can make it certain, that the Spirit of God is the Author of them, any otherwiſe than as we know, that *every good Gift is from above*[c]. Yet ſometimes a religious or virtuous Thought ſhall preſent itſelf to us ſo very ſuddenly and ſeaſonably, that we cannot but have a more particular Perſuaſion,

[z] Rom. viii. 16. [a] Rom. xiv. 17. [b] Eph. i. 13, 14. [c] James i. 17.

if

if we reflect at all, of its proceeding immediately from a gracious invisible Power. But were this otherwise: we every Day see Persons influenced by their Fellow-Creatures, and strongly too, without perceiving it in the least. And is not our Creator infinitely abler to do the same Thing? Our Saviour argues very justly: *The Wind bloweth where it listeth, and thou hearest the Sound thereof, but canst not tell whence it cometh, and whither it goeth: so is every one that is born of the Spirit* [d]. The very Motion of the Air is much too subtle to have its Course and the Manner of its Operations minutely traced; yet its Effects are very manifest, and very great. Thus likewise the Spirit of God, though it be invisible, is yet powerful in its Movements, producing such Changes in the Heart, as nothing else can.

But it may be urged, that even of these Effects there is by no Means the Evidence, which might be expected. Many Persons are as bad, as they well can be: and few, if any, so good, as they easily might be: where then is the Proof of those heavenly Influences, which are to reform the one Sort and perfect the other? Now we should remember, that throughout the Dispensations of God towards

[d] John iii. 8.

rational

rational Creatures, he in no Cafe doth fo much as he can; for doing lefs is more properly fuited to their Make. As we have not by Nature a fufficient Power, he is ready to add to it. But as we have by Nature fome Power, of taking preliminary, though of themfelves ineffectual Steps towards Amendment, he requires we fhould firft exert that: and ordinarily will make our Behaviour the Meafure of his own: though fometimes *that he may fhew the exceeding Riches of his Grace* [e], he extends uncommon Degrees of it to very great Sinners. Our Saviour therefore, when in the Text he promifes the Holy Spirit to his Difciples, doth it only on the Condition, that, with the Strength which they already had, they *kept his Commandments*: and tells them that the reft of *the World cannot receive this Comforter, becaufe it feeth him not, neither knoweth him*; they turn their Eyes from the Light, and harden themfelves againft feeling Conviction. Yet even fuch he treats, by his Spirit, for fome time, in the Manner, which himfelf defcribes: *Behold, I ftand at the Door, and knock. If any Man hear my Voice, and open the Door, I will come in to him* [f]. But if Men *refift the Holy Ghoft* [g], *grieve him* [h], and

[e] Eph. ii. 7. [f] Rev. iii. 20. [g] Acts vii. 51. [h] Eph. iv. 30.

do

do despite to him[i]; no Wonder, if at last he depart, and leave them to the Sin and Misery, which they have chosen. *For into a malicious Soul Wisdom shall not enter; nor dwell in the Body, that is subject unto Sin. The Holy Spirit of Discipline will flee Deceit; and remove from Thoughts, that are without Understanding: and will not abide, when Unrighteousness cometh in*[k].

They then, who are resolute in Wickedness, can hope for no Experience of our Saviour's Promise: and for the same Reason, such as are irresolute in Goodness, can expect but little. For the Rule, so often repeated in the Gospel, is, notwithstanding its first Appearance, very reasonable: *Unto him, that hath, shall be given; and he shall have more Abundance: but whosoever hath not, even that he hath, shall be taken from him*[l]: to all, who receive and use the Grace of God, it shall be continually increased; and from all, who repell and reject it, gradually withdrawn. If therefore Persons, in some Measure well-meaning, too often feel, and consequently believe, scarce any Thing of the good Fruits of the Spirit; the Reason is plain:

[i] Heb. x. 29. [k] Wisd. i. 4, 5.

[l] Matth. xiii. 12. xxv. 29. Mark iv. 25. Luke viii. 18. xix. 26.

either

either they neglect themselves, in one Part or another of their Conduct; or they trust to themselves, and neglect God: of both which Errors he will convince them. But if, by joyning earnest Prayer with diligent Watchfulness, *we draw nigh unto Him, he will* soon *draw nigh unto us* [m], and *pour out his Spirit upon us* [n]. Indeed the very different Effects, that we shall find, both in ourselves and others, from acting in Confidence of mere human Strength, and relying on the Power of the Divine Grace, is Proof sufficient from Experience, that the Cause, which produces that Difference, is a most real and most efficacious one. Let us therefore now proceed,

IV. To the Inferences from, and Uses of this Doctrine: which are, that we be thankful for so great a Blessing, and careful to improve by it.

1. That we be thankful. Indeed the natural Powers, which we have, are all of them the gracious Gifts of a good God. But when these were so weakened and perverted, as they are by the Fall of *Adam* and our own Transgressions, then to provide for supplying their Defects and rectifying their Disorders, by daily

[m] James iv. 8. [n] Prov. i. 23.

Offers of ſuch Light and Strength, as we daily want, inſtead of leaving us to ourſelves, as we deſerved; this is more abundant Grace: and makes our Situation in ſome Reſpects better, than that, from whence our firſt Parents fell. Conſciouſneſs of great Strength is very apt to lead all Perſons, as probably it led Them, into unforeſeen Dangers: which the more we deſpiſe, the more eaſily they overcome us. At leaſt, it ſeldom fails to give us an Eſteem of and Confidence in ourſelves, very unſuitable to the Condition of a Creature. Even in our preſent State, we are ſtrangely inclined to think too highly of our good Qualities; and to forget, that *whatever we have, we have received*[*]. How much more then ſhould we do it, if our native Poverty were not ſo evident in itſelf, and ſo clearly taught in God's Word?

But further: the Doctrine of Grace is as powerful a Guard againſt Deſpair, as againſt Pride. Had our natural Abilities been much greater than they are, and fully ſufficient to reſiſt every ordinary Temptation: yet, had theſe been our whole Ground of Hope; when any Trial of uncommon Difficulty befell us, they could not have increaſed in Proportion to it,

[*] 1 Cor. iv. 7.

but muſt have ſunk under it. Whereas now we are ſure, that as our Danger is, ſo ſhall our Strength be: that *God is faithful, who will not ſuffer us to be tempted above what we are able; but will, with the Temptation, make a Way to eſcape* [p]. Moſt gladly therefore, with St. *Paul*, may we *glory in our Infirmities*, ſince *his Grace is ſufficient for us*, and his *Strength is made perfect in our Weakneſs* [q]: and moſt chearfully may we ſet ourſelves to *work out our own Salvation; ſince it is He, that works in us, both to will and to do, of his good Pleaſure* [r]. Let us often conſider then, what Thankfulneſs it deſerves, that God's Holy Spirit is thus active for our Benefit: and at the ſame Time let us always remember, by whom this Bleſſing is procured for us: *I will pray the Father, and he ſhall give you another Comforter.* The Interceſſion of our bleſſed Lord, founded on his Sacrifice of himſelf to divine Juſtice in our ſtead, this is the Channel, through which Grace is derived from the Fountain of all Good; and a lively Faith in him is the only Way of opening our Hearts to receive the ſalutary Streams of it. But then, as *Faith without Works is dead* [s], we muſt be

[p] 1 Cor. x. 13. [q] 2 Cor. xii. 9. [r] Phil. ii. 12, 13.
[s] James ii. 20.

ſure,

ſure, carefully to improve this invaluable Gift. It was an ancient and uſeful Precept of Philoſophy, that Men ſhould learn to reverence themſelves, and their own Conſciences. If this were not ſufficient to keep wrong Inclinations in awe; it was further directed, that they ſhould imagine they were acting in the Preſence of ſome venerable Perſon, whom they would be aſhamed to have ſee their Wickedneſs and their Folly. Such as had perfecter Notions of Things, went yet further; and taught Men, that in all, which they thought and did, they were under the Eye of an infinitely juſt and holy Being, the Maker, Lord and Judge of all. It may ſeem, that this Conſideration is the very weightieſt, that poſſibly can be. And yet it will ſtrike us with an additional Awe, if we reflect moreover, that in committing Sin, we act not only againſt his known Will before his Face, but againſt his Counſel and Command at that very time given us: that he is not only a Witneſs of the good Thoughts and Suggeſtions that we reject, but himſelf the Author of them: that when our Hearts tell us we are doing Ill; it is not their Voice merely, but that of the Almighty ſpeaking to us inwardly, that we diſregard. Seldom do we fail

in any great Inſtance of our Duty, but ſomething within at the Inſtant reproaches us with doing wrong. Were this nothing but our own Judgement, we ſhould be highly blameable for contradicting it. But what Conviction muſt we feel, when we know it is indeed the Spirit of God; and reflect, how often, how wilfully, how contemptuouſly, we have diſobeyed ſuch a Monitor! The Epiſtle to the Hebrews exhorts them: *Be not forgetful to entertain Strangers: for thereby ſome have entertained Angels unawares* [t]. Much ſtronger is the Argument, why we ſhould admit and embrace every pious and virtuous Impulſe and Suggeſtion: for this is receiving into our Souls a greater than Angels, the Holy Ghoſt himſelf. Let us therefore humbly invite this divine Gueſt to dwell with us, and ever open our Hearts to his heavenly Inſpirations: which, as they will never prompt us to any Thing, but what Reaſon or Scripture plainly dictates; and, by that one Mark, are eaſily diſtinguiſhed from every falſe Pretence to the Spirit; ſo they will effectually enable us, and they alone can, to perſevere in our Duty againſt all Temptations; they will fill us with Comfort under

[t] Heb. xiii. 2.

all

all Afflictions; daily improve us in *all Virtue and Godliness of living*, and make us at Length completely *meet for the* blessed *Inheritance of the Saints in Light* [u].

[u] Col. i. 12.



SERMON X.

GAL. V. 22, 23.

But the Fruit of the Spirit is Love, Joy, Peace, Long-Suffering, Gentleneſs, Goodneſs, Faith, Meekneſs, Temperance: againſt ſuch there is no Law.

THESE Words, even at the firſt Reading of them, preſent to us a very engaging Deſcription of the Good Effects of the Spirit of God on the Hearts of Chriſtians: and conſequently ſet before us a Subject extremely proper for our Attention at this Time; when we celebrate the Effuſion, not only of his Miraculous Gifts, but of his ſaving Graces: the former of which were no more than the Means of ſpreading the Goſpel; the latter, one of the

great Ends attained by it: the one, temporary; the other, perpetual.

But to apprehend the Deſign of St. *Paul* in this Paſſage more completely, it will be requiſite to bear in our Minds his principal Intention throughout the Epiſtle: which was to prove, that Believers in Chriſt were not bound to obſerve the Law of *Moſes*; nor allowed, if they did obſerve it, to conſider that as the Ground of their Acceptance with God. Theſe indeed are Points, concerning which we at preſent are fully ſatisfied: and therefore may poſſibly wonder at his taking ſo much Pains to clear them up. But Men were then very generally, and ſomewhat naturally, inclined to the contrary Doctrine: that Law being confeſſedly of Divine Inſtitution; and our Saviour and his Apoſtles, and all the firſt Converts to Chriſtianity, having kept it with great Regard. Conſider alſo, that on the Queſtion, whether it was to be kept ſtill, the Practice, not only of that, but of every ſucceeding Age, greatly depended. For even we of this muſt have born the Yoke of all the Jewiſh Ceremonies, and retained all the Statutes of the Jewiſh Commonwealth, had it been at firſt decided, that they continued obligatory. Nay, in a yet more important re-

ſpect muſt the Temper and Spirit of our Religion have been different from what it is; had we either expected to be juſtified by the Works of our own Righteouſneſs in fulfilling God's Law, as moſt of the Jews did; which muſt have nouriſhed within us a Phariſaical Pride, inſtead of Chriſtian Humility: or had we been convinced, as we eaſily might, that *our beſt Works cannot endure the Severity of God's Judgement* [a]; and yet had been left to look for eternal Life from Precepts, which we obeyed ſo imperfectly, that they could only condemn us, inſtead of reſting our Hopes on Him alone, who came to ſave us. You will eaſily infer, that our miſtake would be equally fatal, were we now to truſt ſolely to our Chriſtian good Deeds, as if we had truſted in the Jewiſh. It was therefore with great Reaſon, and great Benefit to the Faithful of all Times, that St. *Paul* dwelt ſo much on theſe Points, in ſo many of his Epiſtles, as he did. For in moſt he hath inculcated them more or leſs; though in none ſo earneſtly throughout, as in that before us.

But then, as the Law of *Moſes* conſiſted not only of religious Ceremonies, and Rules of

[a] Art. xii.

Civil

Civil Government, but moral Duties likewiſe; and all theſe had been obſerved together on the ſame Footing: to convince Men, that the two former were deſigned to ſubſiſt no longer, and yet preſerve a due Regard to the laſt, was an Affair of the utmoſt Difficulty, but notwithſtanding of abſolute Neceſſity. And therefore as ſoon as ever he had aſſerted to the Galatians *the Liberty, wherewith Chriſt had made them free*, and exhorted them, in the Beginning of this Chapter, to *ſtand faſt in* it; he quickly proceeds to confine it, ver. 13, within its proper Bounds, by ſubjoining, *Only uſe not Liberty for an Occaſion to the Fleſh*: that is, to any wicked Purpoſe. For our Propenſities to Sin are frequently expreſſed in Scripture by the Word, *Fleſh*, becauſe they ariſe from our preſent fallen State in this mortal Body: as, on the contrary, our Diſpoſitions to good are diſtinguiſhed by the Name, *Spirit*, becauſe they proceed from the Spirit of God; and perhaps in Part alſo, becauſe they are approved by the Spirit or Reaſon of our own Minds. Thus he oppoſes them in two Verſes after: *Walk in the Spirit, and ye ſhall not fulfill the Luſts of the Fleſh.*

But

But ſuch general Terms, though very uſeful on Account of their Comprehenſiveneſs, are liable to be miſapplied, or paſſed over with too little Attention. And therefore, that no one might be ignorant of his own State, ſince every Thing is beſt known by what it doth and produces, he lays before them a Catalogue, firſt, of *Works of the Fleſh*, then, in the Text, of *Fruits of the Spirit*: for he will not honour with the latter Name *the unfruitful Works of Darkneſs* [b]. The former, he ſaith, *are manifeſt*: it being eaſy for Perſons themſelves, and all about them, to ſee, if they are groſsly wicked. But whether indeed we are truly good, is a Matter much leſs obvious; but of too great Conſequence, both to our Direction and our Comfort, not to be examined with the moſt accurate Care.

For this Purpoſe then I ſhall at preſent endeavour,

I. To explain, as far as is neceſſary, the Nature of the ſeveral Virtues, mentioned in the Text:

II. To ſhew in what Senſe, and how far, they are the *Fruits of the Spirit*:

[b] Eph. v. 11.

III. To

III. To lay before you the Meaning and Importance of that Expreſſion, that *againſt ſuch there is no Law.*

I. To explain the Nature of the ſeveral Virtues mentioned in the Text: where probably the Apoſtle did not intend to make out a complete Liſt of Chriſtian Graces; but to ſpecify thoſe only, on which it was moſt neceſſary to fix the Minds of the Perſons, to whom he wrote. The reſt would be underſtood by Parity of Reaſon, or further Inſtruction, if they were not already: and had they been all crowded together, the Multiplicity would have diſtracted their Thoughts too much.

Now the Duties, of which Mankind in general want to be reminded the ofteneſt, and of which the *Galatians* particularly wanted to be reminded then, were thoſe of kind and charitable Diſpoſitions and Behaviour, one towards another. They were engaged in a warm Diſpute upon the Queſtion, which I began with mentioning. Each Side would be in Danger, as is always the Caſe, of uſing the Oppoſite ill: the judaizing, which was the major Part, of treating the Advocates for Liberty, as prophane Enemies to the Law of *Moſes*; theſe, of treating them in return, as Tyrants, and Impoſers of

of a Yoke unnecessary and hurtful. But Christianity requires Meekness towards all Men; especially to such as do wrong through Error of Judgement, be it ever so greatly. And therefore St. *Paul*, after charging as many, as were persuaded of their Liberty, so to stand fast in it, as not to abuse it, points out, in the very next Words, that Abuse, against which it was most needful to guard: *But by Love serve one another.*

Suitably to this, the same Virtue stands first in the Catalogue, with which the Text presents us: where it might indeed comprehend Love to God, *the first and great Commandment*[c]; but, by what precedes and follows, appears rather to signify Love to our Fellow-Creatures. Now this Duty needs but little Explanation. We all know it consists in Good-Will to every one, to be shewn, so far as we have Opportunity, by every Method which is consistent with other Obligations; and in good Opinion and Esteem of every one, so far as they give us a just Ground for it: which Virtues would so effectually direct us right in the whole of our mutual Behaviour, that the Apostle hath, with very good Reason, assured us, but a few Verses before, that *all the Law*, meaning all which

[c] Matt. xxii. 38.

relates

relates to ſocial Conduct, *is fulfilled in one Word; Thou ſhalt love thy Neighbour as thyſelf*[d].

However, placing the ſame Object in various Lights gives a fuller View of each Part of it: This therefore he proceeds to do. And the firſt View, in which he repreſents *Love*, is expreſſed by the Word, *Joy*. Now if the former be underſtood to comprehend Love to God; the latter will very naturally ſignify, (as it elſewhere doth) taking Pleaſure in the Perſuaſion of his preſent and future Favour. But if the one be confined to our Fellow-Creatures, the other muſt alſo: and then it will mean, delighting in their Good, ſpiritual and temporal; ſuitably to the Character, given in another Epiſtle of *Charity*, the ſame Word with *Love* in the Original, that it *rejoiceth not in Iniquity, but rejoiceth in the Truth*[e]; and to that Deſcription of *the Kingdom of God*, as ruling in the Heart, which a third Epiſtle exhibits to us, that it conſiſts in *Righteouſneſs and Peace and Joy in the Holy Ghoſt*[f]; that is, in the Communications, which he hath made, of his Gifts and Graces, to others, as well as to ourſelves: the very oppoſite Temper to thoſe *Envyings*, that are enume-

[d] Gal. v. 14. [e] 1 Cor. xiii. 6. [f] Rom. xiv. 17.

rated, juſt before the Text, amongſt *the Works of the Fleſh*.

The Word, *Peace*, alſo, which follows next, may ſignify Peace with God, and conſequently within our own Breaſts: but is determined by the others on each Side, rather to ſignify, principally if not ſolely, a peaceable Temper and Conduct towards all around us. *Long-Suffering* too, ſometimes means Patience under Afflictions: but here, more eſpecially under Provocations and Injuries. *Gentleneſs*, *Goodneſs*, and *Meekneſs*, are Virtues, which Men, how little ſoever they practiſe them, underſtand very well, and therefore need not have explained to them.

Faith indeed is a more ambiguous Term. Moſt commonly it denotes a Perſuaſion, ſpeculative or practical, of Divine Truths: the latter of which is the Foundation, both of our Obedience to God, and of our Acceptance with him. But ſometimes it relates to what paſſes amongſt Men in Society: and thus it ſignifies Faithfulneſs; or ſuch a Principle, as we may ſecurely have Faith in, and Dependance upon: which it may very well ſignify here; for nothing is of greater Importance in human Affairs. And yet, as the Apoſtle ſeems intent

on

on recounting the good-natured, rather than the merely useful Virtues, Faith, or Belief, may mean in the Text, if ever it doth any where else, due Readiness to be persuaded of what makes in Favour of Persons: as we are told of Charity, in that Description of it, which I just now mentioned, that it *believeth all Things, hopeth all Things.*

The only remaining Virtue is *Temperance*, or Self-Command. For the original Word is by no Means so confined, as that, by which we translate it, is in common Use: but extends to the governing, and preserving within its proper Bounds, every Movement of our Hearts, not only towards Pleasure, but Wealth, Honours, Resentment, any Thing indeed, which can either intice or provoke us to act injuriously. Now in this general Sense it most fitly concludes and completes the List. For, whatever good Inclinations we may have, we shall fail greatly of being such as we ought in the Community of Mankind, if we indulge any mischievous ones along with them. And those, which are called the gay Vices, produce as great, perhaps greater and acuter Misery in the World, than downright Malice: nay, the Irregularities, by which Men are said to hurt no one,

one, but themſelves, always hurt many beſides. Or could theſe Things be otherwiſe, which they cannot: the Deſign of Religion is to prevent all Hurt, to ourſelves, as well as others: to make us happy, as well as harmleſs; happy in the next Life, as well as the preſent. And we ſhall never be either, but by the Practice of thoſe Virtues, which, the Apoſtle here tells us, are *the Fruits of the Spirit*. I ſhall now proceed,

II. To ſhew you, in what Senſe, and how far, they are ſuch.

As, in ſeveral Places of the New Teſtament, the Word, *Fleſh*, denotes the Law of *Moſes*, a great Part of which *ſtood only in carnal Ordinances*[g]; ſo *the Spirit* likewiſe often denotes the purer and ſublimer Diſpenſation of the Goſpel[h]: which is alſo ſaid, more than once, to *yield* or *bring forth Fruit*[i]; and undoubtedly the ſame Fruit with that in the Text. But, in this Chapter, the Word, *Fleſh*, hath plainly, as I have obſerved to you, a very bad Senſe: and cannot poſſibly ſignify the Law; nor *the Works of the Fleſh*, the Works of the Law: nor conſequently can *the Spirit*, which is the

g Heb. ix. 10. h Gall. iii. 3. i Mark iv. 8. Col. i. 6.

opposite Term, signify here the Doctrines or Precepts of Christianity. Some therefore, understanding rightly by *the Flesh* a sinful Disposition, have understood by *the Spirit* merely a Christian one; and by *the Fruits of the Spirit*, the Effects of that Disposition. But indeed the good Qualities, which you have heard explained, are the several Parts, not the Effects of a Christian Temper: and to call them the Fruit, which it bears; when they are indeed the Ingredients, of which it is composed, would surely be an improper Manner of Speaking. Others again, by *the Spirit* understand only the rational Principle within us. And by that Name indeed the Scripture often calls it. But then the Scripture never ascribes Christian Virtues and Graces to human Reason alone, as the productive Cause of them. So that, after all, the common Interpretation is much the best. The Spirit meant is the Spirit of God: our bad Qualities are from ourselves; our good ones from above. Our Saviour hath told us, that *as the Branch cannot bear Fruit of itself, except it abide in the Vine: no more can we, except we abide in Him*[k]. And as our Union to Him, and *Entrance into the Kingdom of God*, or Gospel

[k] John xv. 4.

State, is first made by being *born of Water and of the Spirit*[l]; elsewhere called *the Washing of Regeneration, and Renewing of the Holy Ghost*[m]: so it is, *through the* same *Spirit, dwelling in us*, that we must ever after *mortify the Deeds of the Body*[n], and *be strengthened with Might in the inner Man*[o]. Every Christian Virtue therefore proceeds from the *Fellowship* or *Communion of the Holy Ghost*[p]; the Communication and partaking of his Influences. For *if any Man have not the Spirit of Christ, he is none of His*[q]. And as we ought to pray for *the Holy Spirit*, which *our heavenly Father will give to them, that ask him*[r]: we must also be duly thankful for the Gift; and ascribe the good Actions, that we are able to do, not to ourselves, *but to the Grace of God which is with us*[s]. *We are not sufficient to think any Thing, as of ourselves: but our Sufficiency is of God*[t].

We have indeed originally more or less of right Disposition, either remaining in us notwithstanding the Fall, or restored to Mankind after it, which prompts us to many imperfect Instances of right Behaviour; whence the Apo-

l John iii. v. m Tit iii. 5. n Rom. viii. 13.
o Eph. iii 16. p 2 Cor. xiii. 14. q Rom. viii. 9.
r Luke xi. 13. s 1 Cor. xv. 10. t 2 Cor. iii. 5.

ſtle ſpeaks of *the Gentiles*, as *doing by Nature the Things contained in the Law*[u]. But then we muſt remember, firſt, that this and all our Powers are the Gift of God; and ſecondly, that the beſt of our natural Powers do not enable us to fulfil duly the Law of Chriſt, without the inward Motions of the Holy Spirit: as on the other Hand, His Motions may prove ineffectual too, if we *reſiſt*[w] or *quench*[x] them; if we neglect to *work out our own Salvation* with the Strength, which he gives us, inſtead of being encouraged to it, as we certainly ought, by his *Working in us both to will and to do*[y].

Our own Endeavours then being ſtill neceſſary; and, if uſed in humble Dependence on God, certain of Succeſs; there can be no Objection from Reaſon againſt this Doctrine. Nor is it any real one from Experience, that we have ſeldom, if at all, an immediate and diſtinct Perception of theſe Influences. For our Fellow-Creatures influence us often very ſtrongly, without our perceiving it: much more then may the Almighty. And that the Operations of his Power in the Works of Grace ſhould be

[u] Rom. ii. 14. [w] Acts vii. 51. [x] 1 Theſſ. v. 19.
[y] Phil. ii. 12, 13.

ſecret

ſecret and ſilent and commonly gradual, is by no means improbable, ſince they are ſo in the Works of Nature. This gives Occaſion in each for the Thoughtleſs to forget God; but for the Conſiderate to admire him the more: who by a ſlow and imperceptible Progreſs, for the moſt Part, brings to Perfection *the Fruits of the Spirit*, as he doth thoſe of the Earth; and the former, if due Cultivation be not wanting, with infallible Succeſs; *filling the Heart* of the Chriſtian always, as well as of the Huſbandman uſually, *with Food and Gladneſs*[z]. How very great Cauſe for Gladneſs a Senſe of being *filled with* theſe *Fruits of Righteouſneſs* affords Men, will appear from proceeding

III. To lay before you the Meaning and Importance of that Expreſſion in the Text, that *againſt ſuch there is no Law.*

Of theſe Words it is a very true Senſe, that the Practiſers of the Goſpel Virtues have generally ſpeaking nothing to fear from human Laws: and a very material Senſe, conſidering what ſevere Puniſhments are frequently incurred by the contrary Vices: on which Account St. *Peter* juſtly aſks, *Who is he that will harm you,*

[z] Acts xiv. 17.

if ye be Followers of that which is good[a]? But this, though a right Meaning in itſelf, comes far ſhort of the Apoſtles Meaning: which is, that whereas the Law of Nature requires Obedience, without giving any Certainty of Pardon and Acceptance on whatever Terms, after diſobeying; and *the Law* of Moſes *being added, becauſe of Tranſgreſſions*[b], that is, partly to convince Men of their Tranſgreſſions, partly to reſtrain them from tranſgreſſing, increaſed both the Number of Duties and the Fear of Puniſhment, but afforded only obſcure Hopes, either of Aſſiſtance or Forgiveneſs; the Goſpel of Chriſt was revealed, in God's due Time, to relieve Mankind, on moſt equitable Conditions, from the Rigour of the other two: ſupplying the Promiſe of Mercy after Failures, taking off the heavy Yoke of ritual Obſervances, producing in Men the good Diſpoſitions required; and expreſsly aſſuring them, that a perfect Obedience would not be expected, but a faithful and ſincere one be ſufficient, in order to obtain eternal Happineſs. *Againſt ſuch* therefore, as thus poſſeſs and exerciſe the ſeveral Chriſtian Graces, *there is no Law.* For them there is a Law, to direct and reward them: againſt them

[a] 1 Pet. iii. 13. [b] Gal. iii. 19.

there

there is none, to sentence and punish them. The strict Demand of the Covenant of Works is relaxed: the Burthen of the Mosaic Ordinances is removed: and *the Law of the Spirit of Life in Christ Jesus hath made them free from the Law of Sin and Death*[c]. Still indeed they are subject to the Law, which gave them this Freedom: *they are created in Christ Jesus unto good Works, which God hath before ordained, that they should walk in them*[d]. But this the Apostle considers as a Privilege, not a Servitude: a Privilege, however, necessary to be used: and therefore he expresses very distinctly the Nature of it. *There is no Condemnation to them, which are in Christ Jesus: who walk not after the Flesh, but after the Spirit*[e]. *For to be carnally minded is Death: but to be spiritually minded is Life and Peace*[f].

Here then is the plain Trial of our Condition. If we are destitute of *the Fruits of the Spirit*, it is bad: if we find them in our Hearts and Lives, we have Proof enough of its being good; and need never disquiet ourselves for want of any other. Being able to tell the very Moment, when we became pious and virtuous is not material, provided we are so now: and

[c] Rom. viii. 2. [d] Eph. ii. 10. [e] Rom. viii. 1. [f] Ibid. 6.

happieſt of all are they, who remember not themſelves ever to have been otherwiſe. A Feeling of immediate and ſenſible Aſſurances of God's Favour, ſo impreſſed upon us, that we can certainly diſtinguiſh it to be of Divine Original from the Manner in which it affects us, may be often vouchſafed, but is no where in Scripture made neceſſary: and all Feelings are imaginary and deceitful, unleſs they be accompanied with that one, which the Apoſtle experienced and mentions: *For our Rejoycing is this, the Teſtimony of our Conſcience, that in Simplicity and godly Sincerity we have had our Converſation in the World*[g]. Our Saviour's Rule, of *knowing every Tree by its Fruit*[h], is the only ſure Way to judge of ourſelves, as well as others. And though perhaps we may be ſometimes at a Loſs how to judge; or inclined, and even ſtrongly, to fear the worſt: yet, if this ariſe, not from preſumptuous Sins, or habitual Negligence, but merely from exceſſive Humility or Weakneſs of Spirits; a modeſt Diffidence will never hinder our future Happineſs, nor will a bold Poſitiveneſs ever forward it. Good Men may be caſt down, and bad Men elevated, without any Reaſon. The

[g] 2 Cor. i. 12. [h] Luke vi. 44.

former may ſee much in themſelves to diſlike; and yet God may ſee enough of what he approves, to accept them: they may experience but little Joy in ſerving him; and yet *walk* more completely *worthy of the Lord unto all Pleaſing*[i], for doing it without the Encouragement of a preſent Reward. The latter, on the other Hand, may build upon groundleſs Fancies of their own, miſtaking them for Divine Communications: may be abſolutely confident, wonderfully tranſported, yet find themſelves at laſt fatally deceived. It is not therefore by their Fears, or their Hopes, or their Raptures, that Men are to judge of their ſpiritual Condition. *Hereby*, ſaith St. *John*, *we do know that we know God, if we keep his Commandments*[k]. *Little Children, let no Man deceive you: he that doth Righteouſneſs, is righteous:—He that committeth Sin is of the Devil*[l].

But then we ſhall miſerably cheat ourſelves, if we take that for Righteouſneſs, which is not: or one Part of it for the Whole. If we miſtake a conſtitutional, or perhaps affected Good-Nature, ſhewn, it may be, to Extravagance on ſome Occaſions, and not at all on others, for Chriſtian Love, which comprehends every

[i] Col. i. 10. [k] 1 John ii. 3. [l] 1 John iii. 7, 8.

Act of Juſtice and Mercy: if, with ever ſo extenſive a Benevolence to our Fellow-Creatures, we fail of governing ourſelves by the Rules of Sobriety, Temperance and Chaſtity, or thinking of ourſelves with due *Lowlineſs of Mind*[m]: if, with the Practice of all theſe Duties, we omit the Worſhip of God our Maker, or perform it without inward Reverence and Affection, or live without an humble Senſe of our conſtant Dependance upon Him: nay, if we pay him all the Honour, which unaſſiſted Reaſon enjoins; but wilfully reject or contemptuouſly ſlight the Doctrines or Precepts of Revelation, or any one of them: or if, profeſſing to receive and obſerve them all, we are not careful to improve ourſelves by them into a Chriſtian Frame of Mind, with reſpect both to this World and the next: or if, laſtly, with what Diligence ſoever we may labour in every good Work, we are not ſenſible, that we can neither ſucceed without the Aſſiſtance of God's Spirit, nor be accepted but for the Merits of his Son: we muſt not imagine, that he who hath preſcribed every Article of Faith and Duty, from knowing them all to be neceſſary in our Caſe, will permit us to diſregard ſuch of them as we

[m] Phil. ii. 3.

shall

ſhall pleaſe, without pronouncing us unworthy of the Salvation, which he hath offered; and inflicting on us the Puniſhments, which he hath threatened. Let every one therefore think, and think moſt ſeriouſly, whether he is indeed ſuch, as God requires, in all theſe Particulars: and ſtudy to amend, not to flatter himſelf.

It is very true, *the Fruits of the Spirit*, mentioned in the Text, ſeem to be wholly moral Virtues, and almoſt wholly thoſe of mutual Kindneſs and Humanity. Nor will any Rightneſs of Belief, or Fervency of Devotion, or Strictneſs of Life avail us, if we want ſocial Goodneſs, and Beneficence. But ſtill theſe laſt, as the Scripture moſt evidently ſhews, are not the only Fruits of the Spirit: and therefore we muſt learn to practiſe other Virtues from other Texts, as well as the benevolent Virtues from this. It is indeed ſaid, that *againſt* the Obſervers of *theſe there is no Law.* But then they are ſuppoſed to act conſiſtently; to obſerve every thing elſe at the ſame Time, that ſtands on the ſame Foundation: elſe they obſerve not even theſe from the right Principle; nor will they be able to obſerve them in a ſufficient Degree. Every Virtue is connected with every other: and all Virtue with Piety. For

without the Love of God to excite us, and the Fear of God to restrain us, and the Word of God to direct us, and the Grace of God to strengthen us, we shall neither behave to our Fellow-Creatures, nor govern ourselves, in a proper Manner. *What therefore He hath joined together, let not us put asunder*[n]: but *giving all Diligence, add to our Faith, Virtue,* or manly Boldness in professing it; *and to Virtue, Knowledge* of whatever may adorn and defend it; *and to Knowledge, Temperance; and to Temperance, Patience; and to Patience, Godliness; and to Godliness, brotherly Kindness* towards our Fellow-Christians; *and to brotherly Kindness, Charity* towards all Men without Exception[o]. *For so an Entrance shall be administered unto us abundantly into the everlasting Kingdom of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ*[p]: to which may God for his Sake bring us all. Amen.

[n] Matth. xix. 6. [o] 2 Pet. i. 5, 6, 7. [p] Ibid. ii.

SER-

SERMON XI.

Rom. viii. 16.

The Spirit itself beareth Witness with our Spirit, that we are the Children of God.

WHOEVER believes Religion to be true, and thinks with any Seriousness concerning it, must needs be earnestly desirous to find out, whether the State of his Mind, and the Course of his Life be such, as God expects and will reward, or forbids and will punish. Now this depends on two Things: an Acquaintance with ourselves, and with the Dispositions of our Maker. *The Spirit of Man, which is in him, knoweth the Things of a Man*[a]: and may also *clearly see from the Creation of the World the invisible Things* of the Author of it, *even his eternal Power and Godhead*[b]; those Attributes,

[a] 1 Cor. ii. 11. [b] Rom. i. 20.

tributes of his Nature, by which his Proceedings towards his Creatures will be directed. But still the Holy Scripture teaches, that the Spirit of God likewise bears a Part, highly necessary, in the great Work of discovering, what Title we have to the Mercy and Favour of Heaven. It will therefore be requisite to consider this important Subject, in the Manner which St. *Paul* hath pointed out to us in the Text: and for this End I shall endeavour to shew you,

I. What is implied in being *the Children of God.*

II. How far *our* own *Spirit* is capable of *bearing Witness that we are* such.

III. What additional *Witness* to it *the* Divine *Spirit* may *bear.*

I. What is implied in being *the Children of God.*

All Beings, indued with moral Qualifications, and the Ability of looking up to the Fountain of Perfection, are in a large Sense of the Word, the Children of Him, who is *the Father of Spirits*[c]: being *made in his Image*[d].

[c] Heb. xii. 9. [d] Gen. i. 26.

But

But as the Capacity of resembling him is the very Foundation of Their Guilt, who, instead of improving, wear out, the Traces of this Divine Similitude: so they alone are, to any beneficial Purpose, *the Children of their Father in Heaven*[e], who by imitating his Holiness and Goodness continue Objects of his paternal Affection. For that all pious and virtuous Persons are thus related to him, our common Reason perceives in general: but the more distinct Apprehension of the Nature and Duties and Benefits of this Relation we owe to Scripture.

There we learn, that God created Man *after his Likeness*[f], not only in respect of *Righteousness and true Holiness* *, but also of Happiness and Immortality: that the lamentable Transgression of our first Parents forfeited, for themselves and us, the Privileges, which depended on their Innocence: and that being all become by Their Fault prone to Sin, we become by our own, more or less actually guilty of it: that the Bulk of Mankind, forsaking God entirely, made themselves *Aliens and Strangers*[g] to him, and *Children of that Wicked One*[h], whose Suggestions they chose to obey, and

[e] Matth. v. 45. [f] Gen. i. 26. * Eph. iv. 24.
[g] Eph. ii. 12. [h] Matth. xiii. 38.

whose

whose Temper to copy. But our gracious Maker, pitying even those, who were *Enemies* to him and their own Souls *by wicked Works*[i]; and having formed from the Beginning a Scheme of mysterious Wisdom for recovering them again to their Duty, and receiving them back into his Family; gave them, from Time to Time, both such Admonitions and such Promises, for that Intent, as he saw their Condition required, and the State of their Minds would bear: manifesting to them various Degrees and Proportions of Goodness in this respect; as he doth in all others, both to Man, and the rest of his Creatures, for unsearchable Reasons.

To those, whom in the Course of his Providence he left to be directed merely by the Light of their own Consciences, he certainly did no Injury. For as many, as in any Part of their Conduct followed that, and *did by Nature the Things contained in the Law*[k], were so far *Followers of God as dear Children*[l]. And so many as, having departed from the right Way, penitently returned to it, had always some Ground to hope for Pardon from our merciful Father, who *knoweth whereof we are made*[m].

[i] Col. i. 21. [k] Rom. ii. 14. [l] Eph. v. 1. [m] Psm. ciii. 14.

But

But They; who preserved but the faintest Beam of outward Revelation also, which at first was universal, to guide their Steps and brighten the Prospect before them, had much fuller Proofs of his parental Kindness. And the Jews being favoured with his miraculous Protection, and a written Law delivered by him, and prophetic Instructions superadded, in some Measure for the Benefit of the Gentile World, as well as their own; he saith of Them, in Terms of great Distinction, *Israel is my Son, even my First-born*[n]. Yet still, as that Nation, though wise and good in Comparison of others round them, was both in the Knowledge and Practice of Religion very imperfect, and far from Maturity: God thought it needful, while he treated them on that Account with Indulgence on some Points, to exercise in many so strict and severe a Government over them, that he rather appeared in the Character of a Master, than a Father; trying to influence them more by the Terror of present Punishment, than the Hope of a future Inheritance. And therefore St. Paul expresses their Case, with much Accuracy, thus: *Now I say, that the Heir, so long as he is a Child, differeth nothing from a Ser-*

[n] Exod. iv. 22.

vant, though he be Lord of all: but is under Tutors and Governors, until the Time appointed of the Father. Even ſo we, when we were Children, were in Bondage under the Elements of the World. But when the Fulneſs of Time was come; when the Jews were gradually qualified to have a more manly and rational Form of Religion propoſed to them, with more ingenuous Motives to the Practice of it; when the Gentiles alſo had received ſome preparatory Cultivation, in their Underſtandings and their Manners, from the purer Parts of their Philoſophy, which yet had fully appeared to be inſufficient for the Reformation of Mankind; and when ſo free a Communication was opened between diſtant Parts of the World, that the Truth of the Goſpel might eaſily be examined, and its Doctrines eaſily ſpread; then *God ſent forth his Son, to redeem them who were under the Law, that they might receive the Adoption of Sons*[o]; to purchaſe, at the Price of his Blood, Their Deliverance from the condemning Sentence and the ritual Injunctions of the Moſaic Diſpenſation, that they might enjoy under the Chriſtian Covenant the ſtrongeſt Marks of God's fatherly Regard; and to purchaſe at the ſame Time, the

[o] Gal. iv. 4, 5.

the *Deliverance* of the Gentiles from an infinitely worse *Bondage*, that of *Corruption*, the Slavery of Sin, and the Dread of eternal Death, *into the glorious Liberty of the Children of God*[p].

Thus then did all Mankind regain a Title to this blessed Denomination: the only begotten Son of God condescending to partake of our Nature; that we, being thus become his *Brethren*[q], *might partake of the Divine Nature*[r]. By his Incarnation and Death, *he gave to them, who believed on his Name*, to use St. *John*'s Expression, *Power*, or Right, *to become the Sons of God*[s]: by instructing us in our Duty, he hath furnished us with the outward Means of becoming such: by the Influence of his holy Spirit, thence called *the Spirit of Adoption*[t], he enables and excites us inwardly to make effectual Use of those Means; and comforts us with a joyful Sense of having done it, and of being authorized to claim the Rank of God's Children, or in St. *Paul*'s Language, to *cry Abba, Father*[t]; a Phrase, in which the Jewish Bond-Servants might not presume to address their Masters[u]. The same happy Change is

[p] Rom. viii. 21. [q] Heb. ii. 11. [r] 2 Pet. i. 4. [s] John i. 12. [t] Rom. viii. 15. [u] Seld. de Succ. in bona Def. c. 4.

represented sometimes by the Figure of a new Birth or Creation; the Dispositions and Privileges acquired in it being such, as may well denominate us new Creatures, born again to a new Life. And as all Christians receive from God in Baptism whatever is requisite on his Part for this Change, and profess to act suitably to his Goodness; they are so far justly said to be regenerated and begotten of Him. But if afterwards they act otherwise, *in this are manifest the Children of God, and the Children of the Devil: whosoever doth not Righteousness, is not of God*[w]. None but religious and virtuous Persons then are effectually *begotten again to an Inheritance in Heaven*[x]: and of these only, the Apostle's Reasoning was intended to hold, *If Children, then Heirs*[y]. For as by ceasing to be like God in Purity and Holiness, our first Parents and we ceased to be like him in Happiness and Immortality: so by returning in the first of these Respects to his Image, exhibited to us in the Person of our dear Redeemer, we shall be restored to it in the latter also; *and as we have born the Image of the earthy Man, we shall also bear the Image of the*

[w] 1 John iii. 10. [x] 1 Pet. i. 3, 4. [y] Rom. viii. 17.

Hea-

Heavenly[z]. *It is* indeed *appointed unto* all *Men once to die*[a]: but we shall not continue under this *Sentence of the Lord over all Flesh*[b]: but, rising again to an endless Life, become in the completest Sense, as our Saviour argues, *the Children of God, being the Children of the Resurrection*[c]. *Behold* then, *what Manner of Love the Father hath bestowed upon us, that we should be called the Sons of God.—Beloved, now are we the Sons of God; and it doth not yet appear, what we shall be: but we know, that when He shall appear, we shall be like him*[d]. We do not indeed, and probably cannot conceive distinctly, the Nature of our future State; but this general Description, that *we shall be like Him,* comprehends every Thing that we can wish. And be we ever so ignorant of the Particulars of what we shall enjoy, it is Happiness unspeakable to think only from what we shall be freed; when *God,* as he hath promised, *shall wipe away all Tears from our Eyes, and there shall be no more Death, nor Sorrow, nor Crying, neither shall there be any more Pain*[e]. It follows in the same Place of Scripture: *And he, that sat upon the Throne, said,—These Words are true and*

[z] 1 Cor. xv. 49. [a] Heb. ix. 27. [b] Ecclus. xli. 3.
[c] Luke xx. 36. [d] 1 John iii. 1, 2. [e] Rev. xxi. 4.

faithful.—He, that overcometh, shall inherit all Things: and I will be his God, and he shall be my Son[f].

Since therefore such great Privileges are implied in being *the Children of God*, let us now inquire,

II. How far *our* own *Spirit* is capable of *bearing Witness, that we are* such.

The Prophet indeed hath said very truly, *The Heart is deceitful above all Things, and desperately wicked: who can know it*[g]? But though it be often extremely difficult to find out the Dispositions and Intentions of other Men, when they are bad; and indeed our own, in Proportion as we are bad; (because in such Cases all Arts of Concealment are used, and we can sometimes conceal Things very strangely even from ourselves) yet with a Good-will we may discern ourselves tolerably well. Of our own deliberate Actions we cannot but be conscious at the Time; our Intentions, if we examine them, will be no impenetrable Secret to us. And that uncertain State of Mind, in which we have either no formed Intention, or several not very consistent, each of us may discover to

[f] Ver. 5, 7. [g] Jer. xvii. 9.

be just what it is. Then for our past Conduct: though many Particulars may have been forgotten by us, yet its general Turn and Complexion we can certainly recollect, if we please. And whoever doth but take some honest Pains, after this, to compare what he hath been and is, with what his Conscience and the Word of God informed him he should be, will not fail of being competently acquainted with his own Condition. Indeed no one doubts, but he can know himself in other Respects: whether, for Instance, he honours his Parents, and loves his Friends, and desires to perform his Duty towards them: and why then should he despair of knowing, whether he honours and loves God, and serves him with Sincerity?

But many have no Mind to do his Will, and yet a great Mind to believe themselves in his Favour. Now undoubtedly such may *deceive their own Hearts* [h], especially at Times, with much Ease. But they might also, if they were inclined to it, undeceive them again very soon; by putting proper Questions home to themselves; by carrying it in Mind, that their Interest is to search out the real Truth; and by endeavouring to consider their own Case, as if

[h] James i. 26.

it were that of another, for whom they had no partial Tenderness. Some again are at a Loss concerning their spiritual State, because they are uncertain about such or such Points of their Duty. But as these will not often be many or important; so if they were, by making proper Application they may receive Satisfaction. And in the mean Time, without knowing which Opinion is right, they may know whether personally they are innocent or excusable; by reflecting, whether they have taken such Care, as their Circumstances permit, to inform themselves and judge as well as they could; whether they violate no plain Obligations, for the Sake of doubtful ones; and whether, in all Matters of Obscurity, they keep to the safer Side.

There is yet a third Sort of People, and much to be pitied, who labour, with the utmost Solicitude, to do every thing they should; and yet enjoy no manner of Comfort. Sometimes they will even deny, that they are at all in Earnest about Religion: though their Concern, at imagining they are not, is a full Proof that they are. And this arises generally from a Disorder in the Body, affecting the Mind: of which however it is exceedingly

hard to convince them, becauſe, it may be, they are otherwiſe tolerably in Health. But if happily they can be brought, though againſt their own Perſuaſion, to take medicinal Advice; the Relief, which they commonly find, ſhews by Experience, where the Defect lay. Sometimes again their Uneaſineſs, though ill-grounded, proceeds from a different Cauſe. They read, in devotional Books, Confeſſions of Sin, acknowledging ſuch heinous Degrees of Guilt, as too many have incurred, but They have not: however, they repeat the Whole inconſiderately, though much of it was intended only for others; and ſo by accuſing themſelves of what they have never done, come to fancy themſelves what they never were. And a further Miſtake, too frequent, is, that the pious Authors of ſuch Treatiſes expreſſing for the moſt Part very warmly, in the Prayers compoſed by them, thoſe devout Affections, of which they probably felt an unuſual Share; Perſons, not liable by Nature to ſuch ſtrong Emotions, imagine themſelves totally deſtitute of real Piety. Or if they were formerly fervent in ſacred Exercifes, and now, as they go on towards the Decline of their Days, are leſs ſo; they grow ſuſpicious, that whatever Vigour

and Life there was once in their Profeſſion of Religion, it is all gone; and their Caſe become bad, perhaps deſperate. And thus, while the general Fault of Mankind is, to have much Ground for Fear, and yet no Fear at all: theſe poor Wretches, often with no Ground for any, have more than they are able to ſupport.

Now where this proceeds, in any conſiderable Meaſure, from Conſtitution; their own thinking and reading upon the Subject will but make bad worſe: and others arguing with them about it, though ever ſo rightly, will not make Things much better. The only effectual Way therefore is, to prevail on them, if poſſible, to have ſome little Regard for the Judgment of ſerious and prudent Friends, though in Oppoſition to their own, till they can uſe it better; and ſuffer their Thoughts to be turned for a Time, whilſt other Means are uſing, to Things of ſmaller Importance and even of harmleſs Amuſement. For the ſtrong Exertion either of a Mind or Body, originally weak, or accidentally over-ſtrained, will only produce a ſtill worſe Feebleneſs. Moderate Relaxation therefore is in theſe Circumſtances a real Duty: how apt ſoever the Parties concerned may be to look on it as a Sin: for which Reaſon it ought

to

to be recommended with great Prudence and Caution. But on the other Hand, it muſt not be conceived, that all Concern of Men about their ſpiritual State proceeds from bodily Indiſpoſition. For this would be a fatal Miſtake. There may be, and God knows frequently is, but too much Foundation for ſuch Concern: and then the ſole Cure is earneſt Prayer for Pardon and Grace, and diligent Study of better Obedience. Or if there be no juſt Foundation; the Appearance of the contrary may flow wholly or chiefly from erroneous Notions; which can only be overcome by ſuitable Arguments. And theſe Errors indeed are various: but as they principally relate to the Articles of Repentance, Faith, and Love to God; ſo the following Conſiderations will go far towards removing them: that whatever Faults People heartily wiſh, from a Senſe of Duty to their Maker, Redeemer and Sanctifier, they had never committed, and take effectual Care never to commit again deſignedly, they have as truly repented of them as poſſible; and whether their Sorrow were ever ſo calm or ever ſo paſſionate, makes no eſſential Difference; that a true Faith in Chriſt is known by its Fruits; and if it purifies the Soul and Life, however weak, is un-

undoubtedly genuine: that Love to God, as well as Man, consists, not in Extasies and Transports, of which bad Persons may have strange Fits, and good ones little or nothing; but in a steady Exercise of real Regard and right Behaviour to the Object of our Affection.

By these Means then we may all be enabled to judge, in a considerable Measure, what Manner of Men we have been and are: for this depends on the proper Use of our Faculties concerning a Point, within our Reach. But the further Question, How God will deal with such, is one of a quite different Sort: to which Reason unassisted can return but a very general and indeterminate Answer. Blameless Creatures indeed are secure of their Creator's Kindness: but in what Degree, or for what Duration, even They of themselves cannot know. Much less then may Sinners, as we are, presume to indulge high Hopes of our own forming, when we have so much Cause for Dread and fearful Expectation. It is true, Repentance and Amendment, if they proceed from right Principles, do renew in us the Image of our heavenly Father, so far as they go: and his Goodness will not permit us to despair of his returning Children being received by him.

But

But whether our Return, after the Offences that we have committed, be ſuch as he can accept: or if it be, what Correction he may firſt inflict upon us in a Life to come; to what Rank in his Family he may then vouchſafe to re-admit us, or how long or how little a Time he may continue to us the Being, which we have forfeited; our own Spirit can never teach us with any Certainty. And therefore it concerns us beyond Expreſſion to inquire,

III. What additional *Witneſs the* divine *Spirit bears, that we are the Children of God.*

Now having originally born Witneſs, in the ſtrongeſt Manner, to the Truth of the Goſpel, by his Predictions of it before it appeared, and his miraculous Operations attending the Delivery of it to the World, he bears irrefragable Witneſs by Conſequence to every ſucceeding Age, that all, who ſincerely believe and obey it, are, notwithſtanding their former Sins, and preſent Imperfections, *waſhed white in the Blood of the Lamb, and He that ſitteth on the Throne ſhall dwell among them*[1]: they ſhall be led, by his paternal Care, in ſafety, through all the Temptations and Difficulties of this World; and inherit, in the World to come,

[1] Rev. vii. 14, 15.

a

a blessed Immortality in their Father's House. Then besides this general Testimony, the holy Spirit hath attested more especially a Truth of infinite Importance to Us, and much doubted by the first Christians for some Years, that the Gentile World hath an equal Right to God's Promises with the Jews: of which it was an early and full proof, that he imparted his Gifts and Graces to both equally, *putting no Difference between them*[k]. And this, in all Likelihood, is what St. *Paul* more peculiarly designed to assert in the Text. But the Spirit not only gives these external Evidences of our Acceptance, but assists us inwardly to know our true State towards God, of which we might else be often fatally ignorant. And for this reason *David* prays so earnestly, *Try me, O God, and seek the Ground of my Heart: prove me, and examine my Thoughts. Look well, if there be any Way of Wickedness in me: and lead me in the Way everlasting*[l]. For the same Spirit, after shewing us, what we are, enables us by his Influences, to become what we should be. For *we are not sufficient of ourselves* even *to think any Thing*[m] with Effect: but by his Co-operation we come to have the only sure Argument,

[k] Acts xv. 9. [l] Ps. cxxxix. 23, 24. [m] 2 Cor. iii. 5.

that

that we in particular are the Children of God. The Virtues and Graces of a good Heart and Life are that diſtinguiſhing Mark of true Chriſtians, on account of which they are ſaid in Scripture to be *ſealed with the holy Spirit of Promiſe, which is the Earneſt of our Inheritance* [n]. For as our Happineſs hereafter ſhall conſiſt in the ſame Temper, in which our Duty conſiſts now: he who is really, though imperfectly, poſſeſſed of that Temper, *hath* already received *the firſt Fruits of the Spirit* [o]; and taſted in ſome Meaſure of what he ſhall enjoy abundantly. Whoever therefore *walks not after the Fleſh, but after the Spirit* [p], having his *Converſation* ſuch *as becomes the Goſpel of Chriſt* [q], *the Law of the Spirit of Life in Chriſt Jeſus hath made him free from the Law of Sin and Death* [r]; and of this *he hath the Witneſs in himſelf* [s], if he will attend to it. Elſe indeed, a timorous Diſpoſition, or a feeble Body affecting the Mind, may diſquiet him: but ſtill, ever ſo great Fears will no more endanger the Salvation of a good Man, than ever ſo great Aſſurance will prevent the Puniſhment of a wicked one. If any one is inclined then to

[n] Eph. i. 13, 14. [o] Rom. viii. 23. [p] Rom. viii. 1. [q] Phil. i. 27. [r] Rom. viii. 2. [s] 1 John v. 10.

Suſpicions

Suſpicions and Apprehenſions concerning his Title to God's Favour, without knowing why; or can charge himſelf with nothing, when he ſets about it, but ſuch Defects and Failures, as the Scripture ſhews, and Perſons of known Piety and Diſcretion can aſſure him, are conſiſtent with a State of Religion, let him reject ſuch Imaginations intirely, if he is able. If he is not, let him bear them as Afflictions, but never yield to them as Truths; or fancy on account of ſuch Things, that his Condition is bad, and God hath forſaken him. For there can hardly be a ſurer Proof to the contrary, than that God preſerves his Conſcience tender, and his Life clear of wilful Sin.

As to that reviving Comfort and delightful Satisfaction, which People of this Turn complain they do not experience, and are apt erroneouſly to conſider, as the only favourable Witneſs of the Spirit: it is indeed ſometimes a preſent Reward, which God beſtows on his Servants. But no ſafe Concluſion can be drawn from the moſt agreeable of theſe Perceptions, without a faithful Care to ſerve him: and they, who go on to ſerve him faithfully without any of them, give a more acceptable Demonſtration of the Sincerity of their Zeal, than

than, if they enjoyed them all the while in the highest Degree. For equal Obedience with less Encouragement is certainly of the most Value. When therefore He, who best knows, judges it needful, you shall partake of those religious Pleasures, that you desire. But in the mean while, believe, as you have Cause, that withholding them is for your Benefit: and indeed be assured of this, that both having them and being destitute of them proceeds very much from natural Constitution, or the different Temperature of different Ages of Life, or from using or not using particular Methods of Devotion, which have small Connexion with essential Goodness. Accordingly, many a one, who seldom or never feels much of any Consolations within, that warm him very sensibly, and move his Passions very powerfully, may have, notwithstanding, on most solid Grounds, a calm and composed Satisfaction and *Joy in the Holy Ghost* [t], which *shall be in him*, to use our Saviour's Words, *a Well of Water, springing up into everlasting* Life [u]; and perhaps many another, who hath often been full of inexpressible Transports, will find himself at last fatally deceived by a vain Confidence. For the Dic-

[t] Rom. xiv. 17. [u] John iv. 14.

tates of a heated Fancy, be they ever ſo poſitive, can do nothing to counterbalance the Guilt of a ſinful Life; and all Perſuaſions to the contrary, are not from the Divine Comforter, but our own bad Hearts, or the Wicked one. *For the holy Spirit of Diſcipline will remove from Thoughts, that are without Underſtanding; and will not abide, when Unrighteouſneſs cometh in* [w]. He never leads us to any Sentiment or Action, but what Reaſon and Scripture warrant; nor can any Aſſurance, that we may imagine he communicates to us, of our belonging to God, continue well-founded one Moment longer, than we continue keeping God's Commandments: which therefore that we may all do always, He of his infinite Mercy grant, *&c.*

[w] Wiſd. i. 5.

SER-

SERMON XII.

MATT. vii. 12.

Therefore all Things whatsoever ye would that Men should do to You, do ye even so to Them: for this is the Law and the Prophets.

THE largest Number of particular Directions can never possibly equal the infinite Variety of Circumstances, in which human Creatures are concerned to act: nor can the Memories of most retain any considerable Part of those, which might be given. And therefore, though the utmost Care were taken to specify to us our several Obligations, we must be left after all to find out many of them ourselves, by deducing them from general Rules. And these, (when they carry in them the Evidence of their own Truth and Rightness) at the

ſame Time that they extend our Knowledge to Caſes, which have not been diſtinctly mentioned to us, afford us alſo a clearer Conviction of our Duty in ſuch as have: by ſhewing us, that the different Commands, to which we are ſubjected, flow from the ſame Source, and carry the ſame Reaſonableneſs along with them.

Our bleſſed Saviour therefore, after delivering ſeparately, in his Sermon on the Mount, all the chief Precepts of the moſt exalted and refined Morality, takes Care, juſt before the Concluſion of it, to comprehend the Whole, both of what he had ſaid and what he had omitted, concerning the Ties of Men to each other, in one univerſal Law of Life. *Whatſoever ye would that Men ſhould do unto You, even ſo do ye unto Them.* Not that He was the firſt who made any Uſe of this admirable Maxim. God forbid the World ſhould have been ignorant of ſo neceſſary and ſo plain a Direction for their Behaviour, till that Time. Both Jews and Heathens had ſeen its Equity, and felt its Force, in ſome Degree. But ſtill more was wanting to complete its Uſefulneſs: and That our Lord ſupplied. Moſt, if not all, other Teachers, had expreſſed it in the Negative Form:

Form: as *Tobit*, for Inſtance, *Do that to no Man, which thou hateſt* [a]. And ſo it ſerved only to reſtrain mutual Injuries. But He laid it down in the Affirmative, as an Injunction alſo of proper Kindneſſes. They ſpoke of it no otherwiſe than incidentally, and without aſcribing any ſingular Prerogative to it. But He recommended it, as taking in the entire Compaſs of ſocial Virtue. They could ſupport it only by Argument: but He hath added the Sanction of Divine Authority. In theſe Reſpects therefore it is peculiarly the Law of our gracious Redeemer. But whether we conſider it as a Precept of His Religion, or as one of the primitive Dictates of Reaſon and Nature: in either View we are bound to pay it a conſcientious Regard. And the right Manner of ſhewing this Regard is,

I. To form a juſt Notion of its Meaning.

II. To fix in our Hearts a due Senſe of its Obligation.

III. To conſider its Importance well.

IV. To regulate our Practice by it in the various Relations and Occurrences of Life.

[a] Tob. iv. 15.

On the three former of these Points I ſhall diſcourſe now: on the laſt, God willing, the next Opportunity.

I. I ſhall endeavour to aſſiſt you in forming a juſt Notion of this Rule. Not that it wants Explanation, as being obſcure and difficult: but that Mankind, in order to excuſe their Diſobedience to it, are very apt to put falſe Interpretations upon it; and ſo either pervert it into a wrong Direction, or perplex it till it becomes none at all.

Some Men, if we may judge by their Conduct, apprehend themſelves bound only to behave towards Others, as they are willing others ſhould behave towards Them in their preſent Condition. The Rich and Great, for Example, have perhaps no Favours to aſk of a conſiderable Part of their Inferiors: and therefore too often ſeem to think, they need not beſtow any Favours upon them. They agree, they ſay, to the Reaſonableneſs of doing as they would be done by: and therefore, if they deſire no Service from ſuch and ſuch Perſons, they owe no Service to them. But the Rule is, (and they know it is) not, "Treat others as "you would wiſh them to treat you, Circum-"ſtances being what they are"; but, "as

"you would wish them to treat you, Circum-"stances being changed on each Side." This makes a great Alteration.

Perhaps they will reply, that they are content, if Circumstances ever should change, to receive the Treatment, which they give. Therefore they will overlook the Poor and Needy now: and they allow the World to overlook Them, when they become such. They will revenge themselves of their Enemies, while they have Power; and let them, if ever it comes to their Turn, repay the Vengeance. But here again, they know in their Consciences the Rule means, not, that they shall act as they may think, or rather say, they shall be willing to have others act towards Them, supposing Circumstances *should* change, which they trust they never will: but as they would have them act, supposing Circumstances *were* changed. And in that case they would wish for the very kindest Behaviour, whatever they may beforehand either pretend or imagine.

But even on the Supposition of an actual Change, there are People, who can misinterpret this Rule in such a Manner, as would make the Application of it sometimes a most pernicious Thing. Every Magistrate, were he

in the Place of the Criminal, who appears before him, would wiſh not to be puniſhed. Every virtuous Man, were he a vicious one, would wiſh to be indulged and aſſiſted in his Vices. Every one of us perhaps would be glad, if he could, to have his Will on all Occaſions. Ought we therefore to gratify all the Inclinations of others, becauſe we ſhould like to have all our own gratified? Or if not, is not the Rule an erroneous one, as implying this? Why, according to their different Ways of thinking, ſome will be apt to prefer the former of theſe Opinions, and ſome the latter. But neither is well grounded. For though indeed a Magiſtrate, were he in the Place of the Offender, would wiſh to eſcape with Impunity, yet this is not the only Suppoſition he hath to make. Let him ſuppoſe himſelf alſo in the Place of ſuch, as may be then or afterwards injured by the Offender, if he eſcapes Puniſhment; or of ſuch, as the Precedent of his Impunity may tempt others to injure: let him reflect, how the Rule before us enjoins him to act with regard to theſe innocent Perſons, and he will never be miſled by whatever Tenderneſs it may ſeem to enjoin him with regard to the Guilty. Again, though if we

were

were in the Place of any of our vicious Acquaintance, we should be glad to be assisted in our Vices; yet suppose we were in the Place of those, whom their Vices corrupt, or impoverish, or grieve, or make any Way miserable: should we then be glad, that other People should assist in bringing this Misery upon us? If not, the Precept of doing as we would be done by, far from requiring us to give such Assistance ourselves, absolutely prohibits it. Serving our Friends, when they ought not to be served; and raising those in the World, from partial Fondness, who ought not to be raised, passes, I am afraid, too commonly for great Good-nature: and is defended, or excused, because it is treating them as we should desire to be treated by them. But then it is treating their worthier Competitors, and all such as may suffer by the Faults or Incapacity of these Favourites, which perhaps many, perhaps the Public may, it is treating Them as we should abhor to be treated. We must therefore understand this Rule to mean that we take into our Consideration, not barely the Parties who appear and press for the Benefit of it, but whoever else is concerned, if any be: and *do*, not

to one or ſome only, but *to all Men, as we would that they ſhould do to us.*

But here it may poſſibly be objected again, that if we imagine ourſelves to be ſucceſſively in the Situation of different Perſons, we ſhall of Conſequence deſire different and contrary Things in Reference to the ſame Affair: ſo that behaving towards every one intereſted in it, as we ſhould, in their Circumſtances, deſire, that they would behave towards us, is impracticable: that therefore on ſuch Occaſions, which are not rare, the Rule is in Effect no Rule: and that farther, on ſeveral others it is a very bad one. For ſuppoſe any one to deſire of us, what would be hurtful to no third Perſon, but to Himſelf, or to Us: muſt we comply with his Deſire, becauſe if we were exactly in his Stead, we ſhould have the ſame Deſire? Certainly not. But then ſuch Caſes as theſe, not only happen in Compariſon but ſeldom, and therefore cannot miſlead, or even perplex us often: but when they do happen, inſtead of overturning the Rule, they point out to us a very important Limitation of it, which was doubtleſs originally intended in it, and will ſecure it from ever being overturned. And this is, that the Phraſe, *Whatſoever ye would,* muſt

not

not be extended to mean whatever we can poſſibly wiſh, but whatever we can equitably and allowably wiſh. It is to be underſtood of proper, not of unfit Inclinations: for what we are forbidden to deſire, we are deemed in this Precept not to deſire.

The full and diſtinct Purport of it then, the Senſe in which all the World underſtand it, excepting when they have a Mind to miſunderſtand it, is; "Whatever Treatment you ſhould on cool Deliberation think you had reaſonable Ground to claim or hope from each Perſon concerned in the Affair before you, were He now in your Condition and you in His, be that which you give Him no leſs honeſt and kind."

II. The Meaning of the Rule being aſcertained, the next Point is to fix in our Hearts a due Senſe of its Obligation.

Now the Proof of its Obligation lies in a very ſmall Compaſs, which is one great Recommendation of it; and therefore I ſhall ſpend much fewer Words upon it, than a ſeparate Head of Diſcourſe uſually requires. Moſt evidently, in whatever Manner it is fit to treat any Perſon in any Circumſtances, it is fit to treat in the like Manner any other Perſon, ſuppoſing Him in all the ſame Circumſtances: for he is in regard to every

every Consideration of Duty, as it were, the same Person. There is no Need then of saying (what yet is very true, and would if it were wanted, be very material) that all Men are absolutely equal in many Things, nearly equal in most †; that in whatever they are unequal, the Inequality is of very uncertain Duration, and by no Means always acknowledged; (for scarce any one upon the whole would willingly be any Person else, that could be named to him:) and therefore we ought to act towards each other, for the greatest Part entirely, and always nearly, as being on the Level; and if we do not, those with whom we have Concerns, and Society in general, will never be easy and happy. Such Reflexions go somewhat beyond, or fall somewhat wide of what is needful to establish the Precept in question: which only requires this very brief and plain Demonstration of its Justness, indeed so brief and plain, as hardly to need being given in Form: that wherever the Case is in all Respects the same, (as in order to make Use of this Rule we must in the first Place imagine it to be) there the right Behaviour must be the same too: and

† Nihil enim est unum uni tam simile, tam par, quam omnes inter nosmet ipsos sumus. Cic. de. Leg. i, 10.

whether

whether it be one Perſon or another, I or my Neighbour, who is really in that Caſe, makes no Difference in the Anſwer to the Queſtion, what the Behaviour ſhould be. This cannot be denied, and therefore ought not to be forgotten, or overlooked. For whatever is true, and relates to our Practice, we feel ourſelves bound by Nature to obſerve in our Practice. And the God of Nature, who hath made Us and every Thing what we are, muſt expect us to act ſuitably to what he hath made us: and if that were not enough to determine our Judgement, he hath farther told us expreſsly by his beloved Son, that he expects us to live with one another according to this Rule. Nor, (which completes our Obligation) hath he left us any Room to doubt, but that in every Thing as we obey or diſobey, he will reward or puniſh: and certainly in a greater or ſmaller Degree, as the Matter is more or leſs important. Let us therefore now

III. Conſider well the Importance of the Precept before us.

Indeed the Stamp of Divine Authority upon it, eſpecially joined with the annexed Declaration, that it contains the Subſtance of all, that *the Law and Prophets* have taught concerning

our mutual Behaviour, may fully aſſure us, even before we make any particular Enquiry, that its Moment is remarkably great. And yet there ſeems to lie a plauſible Objection againſt it: that as it only enjoins Men to do to others what they ſee would be right for others to do to them; the Queſtion ſtill remains, what that right Part is: that where this is known, the Rule of the Text is needleſs; and where it is not known, we have no more Direction for our Conduct, than we had before; but are only perplexed with an imaginary Change of Perſons to no Purpoſe.

Now it muſt be confeſſed, that if we had neither by Nature nor by Revelation any Senſe or Knowledge at all of Right and Wrong in particular Caſes, this Rule could not give us any; nor could we underſtand it any otherwiſe, than very groſsly and imperfectly: but ſtill it would be of ſome, and no ſmall Uſe to us. For if we knew nothing elſe, at leaſt we ſhould know what we deſired; we ſhould know too, that in the main we were all alike: and by treating each other as we merely wiſhed (without conſidering how reaſonably) to be treated in return, we ſhould for the moſt Part do tolerably well; pleaſe thoſe around us, and make ourſelves

ourſelves eaſy. Sometimes indeed, for want of diſtinguiſhing, what Wiſhes were fit, and what unfit, we ſhould act extremely ill: but in Compariſon perhaps not very often. And upon the whole, where we had no particular Precepts, this general one would be the beſt that we could follow, even though we could not apprehend its full Import.

But the Delivery of it to us preſuppoſes, and very juſtly, that in the main the contrary is true: that all Mankind perceive, in ſome good Degree, one Sort of Behaviour to be commendable, another blameable; ſome Things right to be done, others wrong. And hence ariſes, inſtead of an Objection, the principal Uſe of our Saviour's Rule. For it enables us to apply theſe Perceptions, where otherwiſe we ſhould not know how; and inclines us to apply them juſtly, where otherwiſe we ſhould have miſapplied them.

Though we every one of us have the Perceptions, yet to form diſtinct Notions of the proper Meaſures and Objects of them; to diſcover, how far they are mere Concluſions of the Underſtanding; and how far Dictates of Paſſions or Affections, which ought to be corrected and moderated by the Underſtanding;

to

to make a rational Examination of the ſeveral interfering Circumſtances of a Caſe, and judge in that Manner how we are to be moved, and how to act; is a Work, for which the Bulk of Mankind is totally unqualified. The different Opinions entertained by ſpeculative Inquirers concerning the preciſe Nature, Foundation, Limits of moral Obligation, run into Niceties, that are altogether beyond common Apprehenſion. And of thoſe, who can be amuſed with them, few, if any, have Skill to proceed upon them in the ordinary Affairs of Life. The great Thing therefore, which the World needs for Practice, is, not a complete Syſtem of Virtue, regularly drawn out and ſtrictly demonſtrated: but a familiar palpable Inſtruction, what People are to do in ſuch Matters, as chiefly come before them. Now the Rule of the Text will inſtruct them, without ſtudying the Theory and Grounds of virtuous Affection at all, to ſhew ſuch Affection notwithſtanding, when it is requiſite; and to conduct as they ſhould what they are concerned in, without troubling themſelves about Refinements, which they may never be concerned in. Seriouſly aſking ourſelves, and waiting for a ſerious Anſwer

ſwer from within, how we ſhould think it reaſonable for others to behave towards Us in the Buſineſs, in which we muſt behave one Way or another towards Them, will excite in us a very peculiar Kind of Attention to it; will awaken our Faculties to judge of this Queſtion with much more Certainty, than we could of the more abſtracted ones, upon which the philoſophical Solution of it may depend; and throw a ſtrong Light on the Point before us, how little ſoever we may diſcern in relation to others, with which perhaps it is cloſely connected. At leaſt it will cauſe us to feel experimentally what we ought to do, whether we ſee it ſpeculatively, or not.

But farther, the Obſervation of this Precept will not only ſet our Minds to work upon the Subject, (and yet many want That to be done for them;) but, which is a greater Benefit ſtill, will ſingularly preſerve them from working unfairly. The Love, that we bear to ourſelves, our Zeal for the Perſons and Things which we like, and our Vehemence againſt thoſe which we diſlike, hinder us perpetually from diſcovering what is our Duty, where elſe it would be moſt evident; and conſtitute our principal

Danger of judging amiſs. Now, if there can be in the World a Method of ſecuring us againſt this Danger, our Saviour's Rule is that Method. Viewing only one Face of an Object is apt to deceive us: therefore we are directed to view it on the reverſe too. Conſidering a Caſe as our own gives us a Bias: ſuppoſe then the contrary to be our own; and our ſecond Thoughts will correct the firſt. Self-Love is what uſually carries us wrong: but the Rule preſcribed us converts that very Paſſion into an Inſtrument of ſetting us right: by placing in their Turns, before our Eyes, two Selfs to decide between, (if the Expreſſion may be allowed) the real and the fictitious one. The Appearances of Reaſon, which ariſe from the Circumſtances favourable to our own Side, engroſs our Attention: let Imagination therefore change the Side, and we ſhall attend to the oppoſite Appearances. The inward Feelings, which we have, of our own Intereſt, our own Honour, our own Sufferings, of whatever relates to ourſelves, are ſo very ſtrong, that we quite forget, how the ſame Feelings affect the other Party. But this admirable Contrivance of a feigned Experience enables and obliges us to feel for each Party ſucceſſively, and thus

to become impartial Judges. Farther than this we cannot go in combating selfish Prejudices, and therefore a more perfect Direction than this, cannot be given.

But, besides being a most excellent and obvious Rule to guide and try ourselves by, it is likewise a most natural and easy one for others, Friends or Opposers, to suggest to us: who thus, one should think, might immediately shame us into doing right, only by putting a Question to our Consciences, which is altogether inoffensive, and yet must produce, if we are guilty, unavoidable Conviction.

But here indeed it must be acknowledged, that some People, especially at Times, are wicked and wild enough to reject, with Indignation, even the most respectful Proposals of their trying a Case by any Law, but their own Will and Pleasure: and that others may pretend to have made in their Thoughts this Change of Persons, which our Lord enjoins, and yet not have made it in earnest. They may say, (for it is very soon said,) that they have already sufficiently examined the Matter; and should be well content to receive the Treatment, which they propose to give: that they cannot but know, whether they have consulted

and anſwered themſelves, and they are under no Obligation to conſult or anſwer any one elſe: the Rule recommended to them makes every Man his own Judge, and they have judged accordingly, as well as they are able, and are very clear in their Sentiments. Now undoubtedly every one, that will, may aſſert this, or any Thing, falſely. And it is very true, that the Direction in the Text is of no Manner of Uſe, as none can be, to thoſe who are abſolutely reſolved not to be directed. But ſuch, as have any Fairneſs of Heart remaining, let them be otherwiſe ever ſo far gone at any Time in Unreaſonableneſs, may poſſibly ſtill be brought to themſelves, by having it put home to them; "Would you really be willing, that others, if they had Power, ſhould determine concerning you, in the ſame haughty and careleſs, or the ſame angry and vehement Diſpoſition, which you now ſhew concerning Them?" You ſay, you would: but is it not in order to maintain your Ground any how, when you are preſſed? For your own Sake, as well as your Neighbour's, deal fairly with yourſelf: and remember, that God ſees infallibly, whether you do; nay, that Men will gueſs, and ſeldom err. If you are cool, ſearch whe-

ther Intereſt or Contempt or Indolence do not ſecretly warp your Judgement; and think, whether they ought. If you are warm, firſt compoſe your Heart, and then conſult it. Wait without acting, till the Tempeſt is over; and when you hear within you the *ſmall ſtill Voice* [b], that follows, be aſſured, that then, and not before, God and your Conſcience ſpeak to you, and tell you what you ſhould do. But were ſuch Remonſtrances to prove ever ſo vain, it would be no juſt Objection againſt the Uſefulneſs of the Rule. For if the Proud, or Covetous, or Thoughtleſs, or Paſſionate, will not apply it fairly; much leſs will they apply any other. And if they could be perſuaded to apply it, as none have ſo much Need of it, none would receive ſo much Advantage from it.

But a farther Objection may be, that not only ſome cannot be induced to make Trial of this Change of Perſons; but others, who in all Appearance make it as well as they can, do not ſucceed in it: but either draw wrong Concluſions, or know not how to draw any. Yet ſurely in general, if ever there was a Precept, that required little Time and Pains to compre-

[b] 1 Kings xix. 11. &c.

hend and practise it, such is that before us. *The Commandment, which I command thee this Day, is not hidden from thee, neither far off:— but the Word is very nigh unto thee, in thy Mouth and in thy Heart, that thou mayest do it*[c]. Still some Attention and Care is requisite in every Thing. And one Point, to which we should attend with very great Care, is, in asking the Question, "Would we be treated thus," to lay aside, as much as possible, out of our Thoughts, that the Answer given to it is immediately to be turned the other Way. Unless we do this, it may be feared, we shall seldom answer honestly; at least, unless we diligently recollect at the same Time, that where doing Right is most contrary to our present Interest or Inclination, it will contribute most to our present Honour and Peace of Conscience, and to our future and final Happiness. Another very needful Caution is, that in order to find, what our Judgement would be, were all Circumstances changed, we must be sure to leave out no Circumstances, that are material, in Favour of the opposite Side. Most of them indeed will flow into our Mind of themselves, provided it be fairly opened to them. How-

[c] Deut. xxx. 11, 14.

ever,

ever, we must honestly seek for the Remainder, nay suppose them, if we have Reason, though they do not appear; dwell upon each of them so as to feel its proper Force, and then determine.

But here one Plea more may be alledged: that sometimes Men cannot reckon up all Circumstances, and therefore cannot place themselves in the Condition of the other: they know it not sufficiently to say, what they should think, if they were in it. Why this, it must be owned, doth happen. And though we may pretend Ignorance falsely, to excuse ourselves from trying what we foresee would go against us: yet they must be very partial or very inconsiderate, who are not frequently sensible, that they want Knowledge of Facts, or Skill to judge concerning them: or at least have Cause to doubt, whether the Opinion, that seems to them the most likely, be indeed the true one. But even here our Saviour's Rule will be of great Service. For if we endeavour to make Use of it, and find we cannot with any Certainty; we shall at least be strongly reminded of our own Fallibility: and our Doubt in determining which is in Strictness the right Part, will direct us, without any Doubt, to

take the mild, the gentle, the good-natured Part, as being the ſafeſt Error, ſhould it prove one. However, there are Methods of aſſiſting our Judgements conſiderably. If we have formerly been in the Condition, in which we now deſire to place ourſelves; we muſt recollect, what we thought then. If we know any wiſe and good Perſons, who are in that Condition at preſent; we muſt obſerve or inquire, what they think; and preſume, that we ſhould think like them, were we ſituated like them. The general Perſuaſion of Mankind ſhould always have more than a little Weight with us, where it is not evidently wrong. And moſt of us have great need, in ſuppoſing that the contrary Caſe was ours, to make large Allowances for its not being really ours, and therefore not ſtriking us near ſo ſtrongly, as that which is.

By the Help of ſuch Precautions as theſe, duly obſerved, we ſhould ſo very ſeldom either miſtake, or heſitate, in the Uſe of the Precept before us, that every Day would afford us new Proof of our Lord's Declaration concerning it: *This is the Law and the Prophets:* to which one of the oldeſt and moſt eminent of the Jewiſh

Doctors

Doctors * approached very nearly, when he said, *This is the Law: the rest is the Explication of it.* But here it cannot be meant, that by this Method we are to learn our Duty either to God, with whom it would be shocking Irreverence to suppose a Change of Persons; or to ouselves, where there is no other Person to change with; but merely to our Fellow-Creatures. And our Saviour, who hath elsewhere told us that the Love of our Maker *is the first and great Commandment*[d], and hath enjoined the strictest moral Government of those Inclinations which are confined the most intirely within our own Breasts, could never intend to tell us in the Text, that right Behaviour to our Neighbour was the sole Thing, about which we need be sollicitous. And therefore he could only design to say, that this Rule would point out to us the Whole of what Heaven required of us, respecting that Behaviour. Just as if, in common Life, we were told on any Occasion, "This is all that you have to do;" we must apprehend the Words, however general, to

* R. Hillel, the elder, said to live about the Time of Christ. This Saying is cited from the Talmudic Tract, intitled, Schabbath, by Vorst. de Ad. NS. c. 10. & Otho Lex. Rabb. in *Odium.*

[d] Matth. xxii. 38.

signify,

ſignify, all that belonged to the Point, which was then in the Mind of the Perſon who ſpoke; not all that belonged to other Points, about which, at that Inſtant, he had no Thoughts of ſpeaking.

And that, by Means of this one Precept, we may ſteer with Innocence through all the Dangers of ſocial Life, I hope you have ſufficiently ſeen Cauſe to believe, though a fuller Examination into Particulars will give you fuller Satisfaction. It only remains, that we apply it faithfully to that Purpoſe in our continual Intercourſe with each other, in our daily Self-Examinations, in the ſolemn Preparations of our Hearts for the Lord's Supper: begging of God, in the appointed Goſpel Manner, that Pardon for our many Tranſgreſſions of this and all his holy Laws, and that Grace to obſerve them better for the future, which our Failures and Weakneſs render ſo needful: giving Glory to Him, and humbly taking Comfort to ourſelves, when our Endeavours have proved ſucceſsful. Theſe Things we muſt each reſolve to practiſe conſcientiouſly, if we regard either preſent Happineſs, or future: if we deſire to avoid the bad Opinion of thoſe around us, who will unani-

unanimoufly cenfure our Tranfgreffion of fo plain a Rule; the Reproaches of our own Hearts, of which it is an obvious Dictate; or His final Condemnation, who *is greater than our Hearts, and knoweth all Things*[c].

[c] 1 John iii. 20.

SER-

SERMON XIII.

MATTH. vii. 12.

Therefore all Things whatſoever ye would that Men ſhould do to you, do ye even ſo to them; for this is the Law and the Prophets.

THE Meaning, Obligation, and Importance of this Precept of our bleſſed Lord have been already ſhewn you: and are indeed pretty generally acknowledged. Moſt Men admit, applaud, and urge it to others: the only Thing wanting is that, without which all the reſt will be nothing, to practiſe it themſelves. This laſt Point therefore I have reſerved to inſiſt on ſeparately. There are few indeed, that can bear to tranſgreſs a Direction ſo evidently juſt, with their Eyes quite open: and thoſe who can, there is little Hope of amending.

amending. But many are either too inconsiderate, or too vehement, to think of it, and apply it to their own Cafe, without Admonition; who yet may be fhewn what is right, though they would not look for it: and bringing home to fuch, thofe equitable Confiderations, which this Rule fuggefts, will be doing for them all we need. It is very true, there is no Poffibility of going through the whole Extent of a Commandment, that reaches to every fingle Occurrence, in which we have Intercourfe one with another; or, in our Saviour's Language, *is* itfelf *the Law and the Prophets*. But applying it to the more common Circumftances of Life, may give, though poffibly no new Knowledge, yet many feafonable Warnings to all, who happen to be in the Circumftances which fhall be mentioned, and will honeftly make Ufe of thofe plain Rules, to direct themfelves, which fhall now be laid before you, to direct whom they may.

Men are to be confidered, either, firft, as Superiors or Inferiors, or, fecondly, as Equals. And the Rule of the Text points out to all thefe their proper mutual Behaviour. Again Superiors are fuch, either in Authority, or only in Rank. And Authority is either public or domeftic.

Now

Now the Conduct of Men in any Sort of public Authority is of ſo great Importance to ſo many Perſons, in ſo many different Ways, and they have ſuch Variety of Temptations, to divert their Attention from it, or incline them to a wrong Sort of Attention; that they cannot aſk themſelves too ſeriouſly, or too often: Is my Treatment of all thoſe, whoſe Happineſs may be more or leſs affected by it, the ſame, which I ſhould reaſonably wiſh for, were I in their Condition? At the firſt View perhaps, Puniſhment ſeems right to me: but were I in the Offenders Caſe, would not Forgiveneſs ſeem righter? Or Tenderneſs appears an amiable thing; but were I the Party injured or endangered, would not Juſtice appear a neceſſary one? I think myſelf intitled to ſuch Profits, or ſuch Leiſure: but what ſhould I think, were another to inſiſt on either, and I to ſuffer by it? Do I conſider, in general, how eaſily my Paſſion, Selfiſhneſs or Partiality, my leſs voluntary Errors, or mere indolent Neglects, may diſtreſs People in a Manner, that I ſhould feel to be moſt grievous? The Station, I am in, is a Truſt: Do I diſcharge it with that Diligence and Steadineſs, that Integrity and Diſintereſtedneſs, that Mildneſs and Patience, that

Senſe of human Fallibility, that Readineſs to ſee and correct my own Miſtakes, that Vigilance to do and encourage whatever is laudable, which I ſhould juſtly expect from another? Can I ſay to myſelf, after a faithful Examination, that I only wiſh a Return ſuitable to my Behaviour? And can I ſay to Him, whoſe Servant I am here below, *Think upon me, O my God, for good, according to all that I have done for this People*[a]?

But then, at the ſame time, Perſons under Authority alſo ſhould aſk their Hearts, before they accuſe thoſe above them of not acting thus: Am I ſure, both of my being well informed, how they have acted, and well qualified to judge, how they ought to have acted? May there not poſſibly be Things very worthy of Conſideration in the Caſe, which I have never reflected upon, perhaps have never had the Means of knowing? And how would it ſit upon My mind, if my Inferiors were to paſs a peremptory and ſevere Sentence upon me, without being better acquainted with the Reaſons and Circumſtances of my Conduct, than I am with thoſe of the Conduct of my Superiors? But ſuppoſe them in Fault, ſhould I be willing

[a] Neh. v. 19.

to have all my Faults exaggerated to the utmoſt; without any Conſideration had, how natural it is to commit them, how hard it is to avoid them; without any Regard paid to what I had done or meant well? And ſhould I further think it reaſonable, that my Betters ſhould be attentive ſolely to the Errors of my Behaviour, without weighing their own towards me? If not, it behoves me to watch over mine towards them: and promote the Welfare of Society in the ſmall Sphere that belongs to me, leaving others to do it in their larger ones. Nay were they to miſmanage ever ſo groſsly, yet if I contribute, either through Reſentment, Ambition, or Inconſiderateneſs, to make bad worſe; I ſhall treat, if not thoſe whom I ſuppoſe to be guilty, yet many whom I know to be innocent, as I ſhould eſteem it very wrong for them to treat me.

Thus much of Superiors and Inferiors in public Life. The firſt private and domeſtic Relation of Inequality is that between Huſbands and Wives: with reſpect to whom our Saviour's Rule moſt evidently directs, that, on one Side, the Inequality be as obligingly concealed; on the other, as cheerfully acknowledged as poſſible; and that on both, That Fi-

delity, That Agreeableneſs, That Mildneſs, That Prudence, That conſtant Attention to their common Intereſts, temporal and eternal, and thoſe of their joint Offspring, be ſhewn, which each of them hath ſo very juſt Reaſon to claim, from the Nature of the Thing, from the Precepts of Scripture, from their mutual, deliberate, ſolemn Promiſes and Vows. There is no State, in which the two Parties have ſo painful a Senſe of the Wrongs they ſuffer; there is none, in which they are ſo often reminded, one Way or other, of the Wrongs they do: therefore few Words are needful to inſtruct them how to apply the Direction before us; and none can expreſs fully enough their Obligation to apply it conſcientiouſly; and to ſearch the Bottom of their Souls, whether they have or not.

The ſecond Species of domeſtic Authority is that of Parents over their Children. Now Parents may eaſily ſuppoſe themſelves in their Children's Condition: for they have been in it. Whatever therefore appeared to you grievous then, and on cool Reflection appears ſo ſtill, you will ſurely never ſo much as think of doing; but remember, not only what you underwent; but how wrong it was, that you ſhould. If indeed you have ſeen the Wiſdom ſince of

Reſtraints, that you once thought harſh ones; and found Cauſe to be ſorry afterwards for Indulgencies, with which at the time you were pleaſed: you muſt follow your maturer deliberate Judgment, not your early raſh one; treat your Children as you would now be deſirous to be treated, were you in their Caſe, not as you did deſire during your Ignorance; and by no Means think it a Reaſon, for expoſing them to Ruin by dangerous Pleaſures and Amuſements, or for condemning them to Inſignificance by conniving at their Idleneſs, that you were extremely glad to be thus uſed yourſelves. But then, on the other Hand, if you are convinced of this, you ought to conſider, as impartially as you can, whether you do not carry it too far: whether your preſent ſeverer Notions be not the Effect of Prejudices, as natural to riper Years, as the oppoſite ones are to Youth: and however certain you are of the contrary, ſtill do your beſt, to make what is needful for your Children eaſy to them, by telling them the Reaſons of your Proceeding when they can ſafely be told: and when they cannot, you muſt give ſuch Proofs on other Occaſions, of judicious Tenderneſs towards them, as may gain their implicit Confidence in the Fitneſs of

whatever you require; and muſt not be much offended, if, after all, the Obedience, which you receive, be too like that which probably you paid, ſomewhat unwilling and imperfect. Another Duty of Parents, which the Rule of the Text cannot fail of recommending to them, is, making a due and timely Proviſion for the decent Subſiſtence of their Children. Either this was done for you, or you ſtrongly felt, that it ought to have been done for you. Which ſoever was the Caſe, you are inexcuſable if through Extravagance or Indolence you neglect to do it for Them: and you are equally ſo, (for the ſame plain Reaſon) unleſs you endeavour with your utmoſt Care and Skill, to guard them againſt all ſorts of Dangers, and ſecure to them all ſorts of Happineſs, in the World, into which you have brought them.

But then, Children ſhould alſo think; (and, as they are extremely apt to forget it, ſhould often call upon themſelves to think,) were there any one, for whom I had the ſame Anxiety and Solicitude, that my Parents appear to have for me; and who had the ſame Obligations to me, that I have to my Parents: ſhould I be willing to have all my Kindneſs received with

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Contempt or Indifference; to have that Perſon prefer every Fancy of his own to my Comfort and Peace? Should any one ever be put under my Direction, ſhall I be content, that before he can poſſibly be capable of judging, he ſhould inſiſt on following his own Judgement, and pay no Deference to mine? Nay, ſuppoſing I had Faults, many and great ones, would I in earneſt be willing to loſe all Obedience and Reſpect on account of them? Do I not already, notwithſtanding all my Faults, expect more Regard than a little from thoſe, that are younger than myſelf? Do I not ſee all Parents expect it from their Children? All Superiors from their Inferiors? And ſhall I not moſt certainly think hereafter, as They do? Why ſhould not my Actions therefore now be ſuitable to what my Sentiments will be then?

A third Relation in domeſtic Life is that between Maſters and Servants. Now is it not exceeding natural for each of the former to aſk himſelf, Were I a Servant, as I might have been, ſhould I hold it reaſonable to be treated roughly and haughtily, to be blamed or ſuſpected without Cauſe, to have every Fault aggravated and treaſured up for ever, and little Notice taken of my behaving ever ſo well; to have immode-

rate Labour or Attendance exacted, or what is fitting in any Kind withheld, or what is due for my Service detained from me; to be neglected in Sickness or Old Age, to be exposed without Redress to Injuries from my Fellow-Servants; to have no Instruction in my Duty given me, perhaps no Opportunity afforded me of learning those great Truths of Religion, which are the best Direction and Support through this Life, and the only Means of being happy for ever in a better? If I should think, and justly think, myself intitled to receive the reverse of this Usage, let me be sure to give it; and study to make that Subjection, which cannot be a very pleasing State, as tolerable as can be to those, who are in it: for mine would be a very intolerable one, were there none such.

And surely, on the other Hand, all Servants, in whatever Stations, ought to ask their Hearts with equal Fairness: Would it seem to me fit, were I a Master, that my Servant should be dishonest or undutiful, quarrelsome or disorderly, negligent or wasteful in my Family, when I had covenanted with him for the contrary good Qualities, and was bound to pay him a valuable Consideration for them? Would I

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be willing, he ſhould betray my Secrets, hurt my Reputation, corrupt my Children; or any Way prove my Enemy, when I had brought him under my Roof to be my Friend? Would I be content, he ſhould quit me without reaſonable Notice; or bear nothing from Me, who perhaps muſt bear much from Him; murmur at every Inconvenience, and appear ſenſible of no Advantages? If not; What I ſhould require, that let me do.

But I proceed now to Superiors, not in Authority, but in Rank only; on Account of ſome one or more of the various Pre-eminences, that raiſe Men one above another. For theſe alſo, and their reſpective Inferiors, have great Need to form their Conduct firſt, and try it ever after, by this excellent Rule.

They, who challenge Reverence on account of their Years, ought frequently to reflect, how ill they would digeſt, were they young, that aſſuming Carriage, which they ſometimes uſe: how unjuſt they would deem it to be treated penuriouſly and rigidly; to be condemned, and it may be caſt off, for mere Indiſcretions, or even a few groſſer Faults. But then young People, in their Turn, cannot conſider too much, and very ſeldom conſider

nearly enough, how bitter it would be to them were they already in Years, how bitter it will be to them, when that Time comes, to have their Experience and Wiſdom ſlighted, and be Objects of Diſlike and Ridicule to every raw and thoughtleſs Creature, perhaps for thoſe very Things, which ought to procure them Honour and Love.

Again, Perſons of ſuperior Quality or Wealth ſhould bring themſelves down in their Imaginations to the middle and lower Condition of Life: conſult their Breaſts, what Degree of Reſpect they would like to pay thoſe above them; what Sorts of Condeſcenſion and Subſerviency they would think it hard to have exacted from them; what Claims of Privilege they would judge oppreſſive and injurious: and let the Feelings, which they will thus acquire, and which perhaps will be new to them, regulate their Conduct. They ſhould examine well what the real State of the induſtrious, the needy, the helpleſs Part of the World often is; then place themſelves in it a while; and they would have a ſtrong Senſe, how criminal it muſt be in any Way to increaſe their Difficulties, how requiſite in every Way to leſſen them. But, at the ſame time, meaner

Perſons alſo have full as much Occaſion to conſider, how grievous they would find it, were they in higher Stations, to be defrauded and impoſed on, how provoking to be complained of without Cauſe, how irkſome to be teized with unreaſonable Requeſts and Expectations; and what a ſhocking Thing it is for them to uſe ſuch Inſolence towards their Betters, as they would think inſupportable, ſhould even their Betters uſe it towards Them.

A third Sort of Pre-eminence without Authority is that, which ariſes from perſonal Accompliſhments of Mind or Body. And here again the Rule moſt clearly directs, thoſe who excell, never to be contemptuous or oſtentatious; and thoſe who are deficient, never to give offence by unequal Competitions, or Marks of Envy; for each would account them extremely injurious, were he in the other's Place. But let us now go on to the

IId. General Head, the Influence of this Precept, where Perſons are equal, or however may be conſidered as ſuch. And theſe are chiefly, either near Relations, Friends, and Intimates, or ſuch as have occaſional Intercourſe, in Buſineſs, in Converſation, in Matters of Party Diſpute, civil or religious, in Subjects

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of private Offence and Resentment, in Cases that call for Good-nature and Compassion.

Near Relations always claim peculiar Affection and Regard, but too seldom pay it. Negligence, Ill-Temper, Emulation, mutual Jealousy in Point of Interest or Favour, alienate and sour their Minds: and each complains of the rest, because none will apply our Saviour's Direction to search and reform himself. Intimacies, and what People call Friendships, are on the same Account perpetually liable to be broken off by Disgusts, frequently very groundless ones; and while they last, are very commonly, either insincere and treacherous, or by wrong Partialities and Compliances dangerous and pernicious: all which Things the plain Question, "would it be right, that we should be treated, as we treat others," might easily prevent. But I proceed to those, who have only occasional Intercourse.

In Business, every one would think it hard, even to be obstructed and delayed, much more to be over-reached, or oppressed: whether by taking Advantages of Law against common Justice, or of his Necessity, his Ignorance, his Mistake, his Inadvertence, his Forgetfulness, or any other Way. Every one would be willing

to make a reaſonable Profit of his Labour, his Goods, or his Skill; and unwilling to allow another more than is reaſonable. Every one would expect from his Creditor all due Forbearance; and more than common Forbearance, when Circumſtances required it. Every one would expect, that They ſhould not become his Debtors, who have no Proſpect of paying; and that they, who, if they will take proper Meaſures for it, can pay, ſhould do it within the Time promiſed. Every one would claim to have proper Notice taken of His Intereſts and Pretenſions, as well as thoſe of other People; nay indeed to have ſome Regard, where there is room for it, paid to his bare Inclinations. *Therefore all Things, whatſoever ye would that Men ſhould do unto You, even ſo do ye unto Them.* To uſe even thoſe unfairly, who have uſed us ſo, is very bad: but to uſe any one unfairly, becauſe Another hath uſed Us ſo, is what, were we to ſuffer ſuch Uſage, we ſhould think monſtrouſly wicked. You will ſay perhaps, We ſhall be undone, if we confine ourſelves to act, as we may indeed reaſonably wiſh, but ſhall wiſh to no Manner of Purpoſe, that Others would act; and therefore we muſt do as They do, not as we would in vain have them

them do. But consider. Our blessed Saviour, you may be sure, foresaw this Objection: and yet doth he allow, that, to secure ourselves, we should violate the Integrity we owe to our Fellow-Creatures? No: but only bids us join Discretion with it. *Behold, I send you forth as Sheep in the Midst of Wolves: be ye therefore wise as Serpents, and harmless as Doves*[b]. It is very true, Innocence without Prudence will not do for this World: but Prudence without Innocence will not do for the next; nor always even for this; in which probably more Men of Abilities have ruined themselves by adventuring into crooked Paths, than weak Men have, by keeping to the streight one. But to proceed,

In common Conversation, you certainly expect Civility and decent Complaisance; be careful to shew it then: you would not be overborn; be not overbearing: you would have what you say or do received with Candour: receive in the same Manner what the rest of the Company say or do. You would be very unwilling to hear those, whom you respect, unhandsomely spoken of: therefore speak unhandsomely of no one, whom it is possible any

[b] Matth. x. 6.

other

other Perſon may reſpect. And remember, there are Perſons who reſpect Religion and Virtue: and feel as much Uneaſineſs at profane or indecent Diſcourſe, as you can feel when your beſt Friends are ſlandered. Again: you would deſire, that when any Thing is mentioned, which can affect your Character, it ſhould be placed in the moſt favourable Light. Place therefore in the ſame whatever may affect the Character of any one elſe. And even if you are not ſo tender about Reputation; yet recollect, that the People, of whom you are diſcourſing, may: behave therefore as you would wiſh them to do, if you had the ſame Senſibility, that they have. You are tempted perhaps to take Liberties in Talk, becauſe you have a Talent for Satire and Ridicule. But how would you wiſh others to exerciſe this Talent with Reſpect to you, if they had it, and you not? Should you deſerve to be made odious or contemptible, merely becauſe they had Wit. But your Motive, it may be, is of a higher Kind. You have a Zeal againſt Wickedneſs and Folly. Why, ſhew it then in promoting Virtue and Wiſdom, and all will be well. But paſſing haſty Cenſures, and ſpreading bad Reports, poſſibly with little or no Foundation,

is a ſtrange Method of being zealous for what is good; and a moſt unrighteous one you would think it, were the Caſe your own. Or ſuppoſing that the Fault, about which you are ſo vehement, is but too certain: were you never guilty of any, were you never in Danger of any? And would it have been well done to expoſe you for it to the utmoſt? Might it not have made you deſperate, inſtead of reforming you? How much more rational, as well as humane, is the Apoſtle's Injunction, to *ſpeak Evil of no Man, but ſhew all Meekneſs unto all Men*; *for*, ſaith he, *we ourſelves were ſometimes fooliſh, diſobedient, deceived*[c]. Our Religion, (and it is greatly to its Honour) commands us to be ſtrict in our own Conduct, yet gentle in our Remarks on that of others: and its Profeſſors are too often the Reverſe; looſe in their Principles and Practices, bitter in their Reflexions. Yet ſtill, ſuch Freedoms in Diſcourſe, when they are taken, not with Deſign to do Harm, but through mere Inconſiderateneſs, ought not to be much reſented; becauſe moſt Men muſt be conſcious, that they are too apt to take the ſame: for which they would undoubtedly think it hard, not to be pardoned.

[c] Tit. iii. 2, 3.

And,

And, above all, they who know that their Behaviour hath given ground for Cenſure, ought to bear it very patiently, as what they have deſerved. For ſo they would judge others under the ſame Circumſtances ought to do, both in Point of Juſtice and of Prudence.

Another Occaſion, on which dreadful Injuries, both in Word and Deed, are ſadly frequent, is that of Diſputes and Contentions, religious and civil. For the Mildneſs and Love, which both our common Nature and common Chriſtianity dictate, is not only tranſgreſſed in theſe Caſes by many without perceiving it, but ſome imagine the utmoſt Vehemence a Duty; and defend it, by ſaying directly, that were it poſſible for them to be as bad, as their Adverſaries are, they ſhould think no Uſage too ſevere. But muſt you not think it too ſevere, to have it taken for granted you were thus bad; to have every random Aſſertion to your Diſadvantage immediately believed; and a ſhare of every ill Thing, that any one of the ſame Denomination had done, imputed to You: to have Men work up their own Paſſions againſt you to any Height without Reaſon, or follow the common Cry of their Side, or the faſhionable one of the Times, without Conſideration?

Surely

Surely you ought to consider well, how you should like to have the Sect or Party, the Profession or Body of Men, that you were of, pointed out to be run down thus, right or wrong. And in general it ought to be considered well; by those, who have Power, what Forbearance and Moderation they should claim, were others in Power; by those who are weakest, what Freedoms they would account unfit to be taken with them, if they were the Strongest; and by all Persons, what they would reckon allowable and fair in their Opposers, what on the contrary dishonourable and criminal.

But I go on from these more public Altercations to that with which they are closely connected, Matters of private Displeasure and Offence. You make no Scruple perhaps of doing what must naturally disoblige and provoke others; but without Regard to that, pursue your own Interest, or indulge your own Humour. Now would you indeed be well pleased, that the rest of the World should be as regardless of your Inclination or Convenience? You apprehend yourself injured, and resolve instantly on Revenge, to the Extent of your Ability. But could you possibly think it right,

that the Anger of another, (and your own is just as blind) should be left without Control to determine, whether and how far you had done Wrong, and what return it deserved: that he should be Judge and Executioner in his own Cause, and perhaps not take a Moment to cool first? You feel, by having received an Injury, how very bad a Thing it is to do one. Recollect then: Returning one is doing one; is doing it designedly too, with that single mischievous Intention: Whereas in all Likelihood the Person, at whom you are so exasperated, meant much more to serve or gratify himself, than to hurt you, if he meant the latter at all. Or whatever his Intentions were, you have both a Precept of Scripture to direct you on the Occasion, and a Promise of Scripture to indemnify you. *Say not, I will do to him, as he hath done to me; I will render to the Man according to his Work*[d]. *Say not, I will recompense Evil: but wait on the Lord, and he shall save thee*[e]. If then you take the opposite Course, you reject what God hath expressly appointed to be your Rule; you chuse, instead of it, what he hath expressly forbidden to be your Rule; you put yourself from under the

[d] Prov. xxiv. 29. [e] Prov. xx. 22.

Protection of his Providence, and knowingly expose yourself to his heaviest Displeasure. But you will say, If we may not revenge ourselves, we may surely resolve to have nothing more to do with the Man who hath injured us; and look on all Obligations of Kindness to him, as cancelled. Now here again consider: Would it be reasonable, if you had once, or more than once, behaved to any one as you ought not, that therefore you should be rejected for ever? Might not you regain in Time a Title even to Friendship and Confidence? Might not you from the first be a fit Object of lower Marks of Favour? Or supposing you did not deserve them, might it not be very laudable and right to treat you better, than you deserved? Do not you hope to be treated thus, on many Occasions by Men, and in the important Concern of your future Happiness by God himself? whose Mercy you dare ask for on no other Terms, than those of being forgiven, as you forgive. If therefore the Forgiveness, which you beg, includes Bounty and gracious Notice; let that, which you grant, do so likewise, in a proper Degree; and imitate the Goodness, which otherwise you will pray for in vain. Observe but in what Manner our Saviour hath in St.

Luke connected the Precept before us, with that of pardoning Injuries. *As ye would that Men ſhould do to You, do ye alſo to Them likewiſe —Love your Enemies and do good, and ye ſhall be the Children of the Higheſt: for he is kind to the Unthankful and the Evil. Be ye therefore merciful, as your Father alſo is merciful* [f]. But at leaſt, you will ſay, proper Submiſſion may be required firſt. Why undoubtedly it may. And he, who hath done the Wrong, ſhould always conſider, whether, if he had received it, the Satisfaction, which he deems it beneath him to give, would not have appeared very neceſſary for him to claim. But then at the ſame Time, you, who have received the Wrong, ſhould conſider too, whether if you had done it, you could have yielded to the rigorous Terms and debaſing Compliances which you exact: nay, would not have thought it very hard, that ſuch, as might be in Strictneſs due, ſhould be without Abatement inſiſted on.

Another Situation, requiſite to be mentioned, in which we are ſtrangely apt to violate our Saviour's Rule, is, when Connexions or Circumſtances call us to ſhew Courteſy, Love, or Pity. Very commonly we have ſcarce any

[f] Luke vi. 31, 35, 36.

Attention to return the obliging Behaviour, which we abſolutely expect: give mighty ſmall Proofs of Affection, even where we ſhould be miſerable, if the greateſt were not given Us; and hardly expreſs the leaſt Compaſſion to the Afflicted, whereas we ſhould look for all poſſible Aſſiduity of Tenderneſs, were we in their Condition. Or if even our Strength of Mind were ſuch as not to need Support; we ought ſurely to aſk ourſelves, what we ſhould juſtly wiſh for, had we leſs Strength, as others may. But inſtead of being moved by that Conſideration to a friendly Sympathy, we can perſecute the Wretched with unreaſonable harſh Maxims of impracticable Wiſdom; nay, perhaps imbitter their Sorrows with groundleſs or immoderate Reproaches, when the juſteſt and the gentleſt Reproofs would be ill-timed and hard-hearted. What Feelings the Perſons thus treated muſt have, and conſequently what our own under the ſame Treatment would be, is incomparably ſet forth in thoſe words of Job, *I alſo could ſpeak as ye do: if your Soul were in my Soul's ſtead, I could heap up Words, and ſhake my Head at you. But I would ſtrengthen you with my Mouth; and the moving of my Lips*

ſhould

should asswage your Grief [g]. This therefore is our Duty: for this would assuredly be our Desire. But then, as they, who are not in Affliction, should think, if they were, with what Kindness they should expect to be attended and regarded: so they, who are, should think in Return, if it had fallen to their Lot to pay this Attendance and Regard, what Patience and Reasonableness they should have expected from those, to whom they paid it; and what thankful Acknowledgements, for discharging an Office but tolerably well, which must be in itself a melancholy and unpleasing one.

These are some, and I hope the more usual, of the numberless Cases, in which we should all be solicitously careful to *do to others, as we would they should do to us.* Indeed were we to aim at taking one Step further, and a little exceed the Goodness, which we conceive we might equitably demand, we should seldom go beyond the Rule, but only make somewhat surer not to fall short of it: a Point, of which it concerns us in the highest Degree to make sure. For when God is so gracious, as to appeal to our Hearts, and govern us by a Law, as it were, of our own enacting: (a Law, which

[g] Job xvi. 4, 5.

we cannot be ignorant of, cannot except againſt, and one ſhould think can hardly forget or miſapply;) we muſt be dreadfully inexcuſable before him, when we diſobey it. Indeed the general Diſobedience to it which there is in the World, affords us a deplorable View of the State of Mankind; and ſhould excite us to a ſtrict Examination of our paſt, and a diligent Watchfulneſs over our future Conduct. We have all tranſgreſſed even this moſt obvious and unexceptionable Rule: let us all beg that Pardon, which our Saviour hath merited, for what we have done ill; and apply for that Grace of the holy Spirit, without the Help of which we can do nothing well.

SERMON XIV.

GEN. ii. 3.

And God blessed the Seventh Day, and sanctified it: because that in it he had rested from all his Work, which God created and made.

THESE Words contain the Account of that original Appropriation of one Day in seven to the Purposes of Religion, from which all subsequent Appointments of the same Nature have been derived. And therefore I shall take Occasion from them to shew, God willing, in three Discourses,

I. On what Authority the Observation of a weekly Day of public Devotion and Rest is founded.

II. In what Manner that Day ought to be spent.

I. On what Authority it is founded.

It is not only our Duty to addreſs God in private Prayer, but alſo to aſſemble ourſelves together in order to offer up to him our united Devotions. As we are by Nature formed for Society, we ought to be ſocial in Religion as well as in other Inſtances. As we are all dependant for every Thing we have or hope for on the ſame Almighty Being the Creator and Governor of the Univerſe, we ought all to join in openly acknowledging that Dependance, in begging with one Voice the Supply of our common Wants, the Forgiveneſs of our common Offences, the Removal of our common Calamities; and in returning Thanks for the various Mercies which we have in common received from our heavenly Benefactor. But beſides this, public Worſhip is of all other Things the beſt calculated both to cheriſh in ourſelves, and by the powerful Force of Sympathy and Example to excite in others the warmeſt Sentiments of Piety and Virtue. Indeed without it (as both Reaſon and Experience prove) Mankind would gradually loſe all Senſe of Religion; and without that the lower Part of them would quickly ſink into the groſſeſt Depravity of Mind, and Profligacy of Manners.

Joining in Family-Devotions might indeed in ſome Degree guard againſt theſe Miſchiefs, and anſwer the other good Ends abovementioned: and large Families may be conſidered almoſt in the ſame Light with ſmall Pariſhes. But Family-Devotions are ſhamefully neglected: and were they univerſally kept up; they could ſeldom be expected to convey ſo much Knowledge, and would ſcarce ever produce in the Mind ſo ſtrong a Feeling, that whole Neighbourhoods and Nations are Members of one Body, as the Offices performed in more numerous Aſſemblies do.

Since therefore on theſe Accounts there muſt be public Worſhip and Inſtruction: it is not only uſeful, but neceſſary, that there ſhould be alſo fixed Times, appointed for it by ſufficient Authority: for were it left at large to be performed at any time, there is but too much Reaſon to fear that it would be frequently delayed, or neglected, and at laſt perhaps wholly thrown aſide. But how much and what Time ſhould be devoted to this Employment, if God had given no Intimation of his Will, every Society muſt have determined for themſelves: and in all likelihood would have determined very differently. For the imagined

Myſteries

Myſteries and Excellencies of the Number Seven would probably have been no more regarded, than thoſe of other Numbers, which have as good a Claim: at leaſt they would never have influenced even the ſpeculative Part, much leſs the Bulk of Mankind, to any ſuch Purpoſe as this. And even ſuppoſing they could have known farther, (which without Revelation they could not) that God had ceaſed on the Seventh Day from his Work of Creation, that alone had been no Evidence, that Man ought to ceaſe every Seventh Day from his ordinary Labour, and ſpend it in religious Exerciſes. A Divine Direction therefore muſt be extremely ſerviceable: both to prevent all Doubts how much Time would be enough; and to ſecure a general Agreement in the particular Time. For if ſeveral Sorts of Perſons obſerved perhaps all the ſeveral Days of the Week, this Diverſity, were it to obtain only in different Nations, would be inconvenient: but in the ſame, would obſtruct Buſineſs to a degree almoſt inſupportable.

Now ſuch a Direction from above ſeems to have been vouchſafed in the very Beginning of the World. For when we read in the Text, and the Verſe preceding it, that *on the Seventh Day*

Day God ended his Work, and therefore *blessed the Day and sanctified it*; that is, assigned to it the honourable Distinction of preserving the Memory of his having created all Things: the obvious Interpretation is, that this Appointment took Place from the Time that the Reason for it took Place, from the Time at which it is introduced in the Sacred History; and not from that of the Jewish Deliverance from *Egypt*, two thousand five hundred Years after. For it is quite improbable, that *Moses* would both mention the Institution of the Sabbath so very long before he needed, and mention it in Terms, that naturally imply its being instituted at the Creation, if it was not. Nor is the contrary Opinion of some ancient Fathers of any Weight in this Case; and much less that of modern Rabbins. For neither of them had better Opportunities of knowing the Truth, than we have now. And both of them had Prejudices to bias their Judgement. The former, in disputing against the Jews of that Time, were tempted to defend their own Practice of not observing the Jewish Sabbath, by alledging, that the Patriarchs before the Law did not observe it. Yet some of them appear to have been of a different Opinion,

nion †. As to the Rabbins, (though Philo the Jew *, far ancienter than any of them, and ſome of their own number ‡, thought the Obſervance of the Sabbath as old as the World, yet in general) they magnified themſelves in after Ages, by pretending that this excellent Ordinance was firſt eſtabliſhed in the Hebrew Nation. And it is very true, we find no Inſtance of keeping the Sabbath before the Days of *Moſes*. But then, on the other Hand, we find not even the Name of the Sabbath for almoſt 500 Years after *Moſes*, that is, till *David*'s Reign; and then only once [a]; and but once again [b] for above 100 Years more. Yet no one doubts of its being appointed, and in the main obſerved through that Time: and therefore why not in the preceding Times alſo; ſince there is the ſame Reaſon to be given for omitting the Mention of it in both Caſes; that the Hiſtory is ſhort, and comprehends no Particulars, that made ſpeaking of it neceſſary?

But ſtill, between the Creation and *Moſes*, we find not only ſeven-fold Vengeance threat-

† Novatian de Cibis Judaicis, c. 3. ſaith, Decem Sermones illi in Tabulis nihil novum docent, ſed quod obliteratum fuerat admonent.

* De vit Moſ. l. 3. p. 175. ‡ Seld de In. & G. l. 3. c. 13.

[a] 1 Chron. xxiii 31. [b] 2 Kings iv. 23.

cned

ened in the Case of *Cain*[c], and *Noah* taking seven Pairs of every clean Beast into the Ark[d], and *Jacob* bowing before *Esau* seven Times[e], but both Years[f] and Days[g] counted by Sevens; and a very particular Notice taken of the Interval of seven Days in the History of the Deluge[h]. Nay, we find the very Name of Weeks used[i]: which could not well have any other Original, than from the Institution of keeping the seventh Day holy. For there is no obvious Foundation in Nature for dividing Time into Weeks, as there is into Months and Years from the Course of the Sun and Moon: nor any Manner of Probability, that in those early Ages the Period of seven Days was introduced from Regard to the seven Planets; a Number which doth not appear to have been known then. For the Patriarch *Joseph* reckons eleven principal Stars[k]: and seven are not once named throughout the Old Testament. Indeed the Prophet *Amos* in our Translation speaks of the seven Stars[l]; but the Hebrew Word expresses no Number, and certainly doth not mean the Planets, and what it doth mean is doubtful; and besides, *Amos*

c Gen. iv. 15. d Gen. vii. 2, 3. e Gen. xxxiii. 3.
f Gen xxix. 18, 27. xli. 27, 29. g Gen. l. 10.
h Gen. vii. 4, 10. viii. 10. 12. i Gen. xxix. 27, 28.
k Gen. xxxvii. 9. l Amos v. 8.

lived

lived 700 Years after *Moses*. Now supposing the Appointment of observing this Day to be made at the Creation, it would bind all Men, to whose Knowledge it came, till it was either in Form repealed, or tacitly superseded by substituting another in its Room. Accordingly we find *Job*, who is plainly not represented as a Jew, and is by many thought as early as *Moses*, offering Sacrifices constantly at the End of every seven Days[m]. And perhaps the seventh was that Day, on which the Sons of God (who, we read, sang together and shouted for Joy at the Foundation of the Earth[n]) are said in his History to present themselves before the Lord[o]. For it seems plainly to have been a stated Day, and we know of no other. Farther still, we find *Balaam* appointing seven Altars to be built, and offering on them seven Bullocks and seven Rams[p], three Times over: which looks like a Memorial of the original seventh Day. Very probably indeed the Generality of Mankind in Process of Time forgot the Celebration of the Sabbath, as they did the rest of their Duty: yet not so entirely, but that a few scattered and obscure Footsteps of this, as well as other Ar-

[m] Job. i. 2, 4, 5. [n] Job. xxxviii. 7. [o] Job. i. 6. ii. 1.
[p] Numb. xxiii. 1, 14, 29.

ticles

ticles of the primitive Religion, remained long afterwards amongst the Heathen. For though a considerable Part of the Notice, which they took of the seventh Day, and the Period of seven Days, might proceed from other Causes, one cannot so well think the Whole did, as it began so early, and extended so wide *.

Possibly the Jews too had in a great Measure lost the Remembrance of the Institution, during their Bondage in *Egypt* at least: where indeed their attempting to observe it, by not working upon it, would only have exposed them to a larger Share of ill Treatment: on which Account Providence might rather permit it to fall for a Time into Oblivion. Yet when God is said, in *Nehemiah*, to have made *known to them his holy Sabbath by the Hand of Moses*[q], this doth not, according to the Use of like Phrases elsewhere, prove, that they were totally ignorant of it before: much less, that their Fore-Fathers were. And when *Moses*, in *Exodus*, before the Delivery of the Law, tells

* Yet the 7th Day, regarded by many of the Heathen, and which Philo mentions as being so universally regarded by them, was the 7th Day of the Month. Vid. Carpzovii Philoniana. The Observation of the 7th Day of the Week perhaps degenerated into this.

q Neh. ix. 14.

them,

them, *To-morrow is the Rest of the holy Sabbath unto the Lord*[r], it appears both from the Words themselves, and the Time of speaking them, that they are an Admonition concerning the Revival of an intermitted Observance, not an Institution of a new one. For why should a Commandment be first given in this Manner separately then, which was in a Month after to be promulged with so much greater Solemnity among the rest of the Ten, upon Mount *Sinai*? But if on the contrary it was from the Beginning, it might be very proper to remind the People of That, before they heard it joined with the rest by the Mouth of God Himself. And indeed the other nine being as old as the Creation, and obligatory on all Men, it seems extremely probable from thence alone, that this, the fourth in Number, was so too.

However, the Nature of the Appointment is more explicitly set forth in *Exodus*, than in *Genesis*. Not only Sanctification of the Day in general, but Rest in particular is enjoined; and the Injunction is extended not only to Servants, but the very Cattle. Several Reasons for it are also there assigned. The first is the original one, because *God rested on the Seventh Day*:

[r] Exod. xvi. 23.

that

that is, He ceased from his Work, it being accomplished. For *the Creator of the Ends of the Earth*, as the Prophet *Isaiah* justly teaches, *fainteth not, neither is weary*[s]. And as worshipping no other Deity, than the Maker of all Things, was the great Article, that distinguished the Religion of the Jews from the Pagan; and as the Sabbath was a principal Instrument of preserving and exercising this Worship: it is therefore said to be *a Sign between God and them, throughout their Generations*[t]. A second Use of the Sabbath was, to be a Memorial, in future Times, of the happy Exchange, which they had just then made, of a State of Servitude and Labour for one of Liberty and Ease. *Remember, that thou wast a Servant in the Land of Egypt, and that the Lord thy God brought thee out thence, through a mighty Hand, and by a stretched out Arm: therefore he commanded thee to keep the Sabbath Day*[u]. And it hath been thought by some learned Men, that the Time of keeping it was then changed in such Manner, as that the primitive and patriarchal Sabbath was restored, when afterwards that Day, on which our Lord arose again, was

[s] Isai. xl. 28. [t] Exod. xxxi. 13. [u] Deut. v. 15.

appointed to be observed *. But without examining into this, I proceed to the third Motive, assigned for the Appointment of the Sabbath, which was Mercy and Humanity: *that thine Ox and thine Ass may rest, and the Son of thy Handmaid and the Stranger may be refreshed*[w]. And because that perverse Nation would otherwise have been likely, both to explain away general Rules to almost Nothing, and indeed to slight all Rules: therefore to the Prohibition in the Commandment, particular ones of such and such Work were added, in other Parts of the Law †; and the Whole was inforced by the Penalty of Death[x]: whereas

* Wollius, Act. Er. 1745, p. 694. thinks, that the 7th Day of the Creation being the first full Day of Adam's Life, it would be not only his Sabbath, but the first of his Week; and that being afterwards turned to the Worship of the Sun, God gave the Jews the 7th of the Week instead of it, but that Christ restored it. But Vignoles saith the Beginning of the Year was not changed at the Exodus: and that the Day of it was Thursday. Others think, that the 6th Day of the patriarchal forgotten Week being that of the Jewish Exodus was made their 7th and Sabbath: whence the patriarchal 7th would be their and our first.

[w] Exod. xxiii. 12.

† Of Ploughing and Harvest Work, Exod. xxxiv. 21. of kindling Fires, Exod. xxxv. 3. Indeed this last seems almost in Effect prohibited before the Law, Exod. xvi. 23. Nor might they buy or sell. Neh. xiii. 16

[x] Exod. xxxi. 14.

People

People of better Dispositions might have been trusted farther, and punished less rigorously.

On this Footing Things remained, till Christianity appeared: which being in itself a complete Institution and Rule of human Duty, no Precepts given to Mankind before, under less perfect Dispensations, continue any farther obligatory, than they are either plainly confirmed by it, or in their own Nature moral and unchangeable. This not only the Reason of the Thing shews, but St. *Paul* hath fully and repeatedly declared it*: and especially concerning the Observation of the seventh Day of the Week, (which was the Jewish Sabbath) by Name, in the second Chapter of his Epistle to the Colossians: where having first laid it down, that *Christ hath blotted out the Hand-Writing of* the former *Ordinances*, he infers: *Let no Man therefore judge you in Meat or in Drink, or in Respect of an Holy Day, or of the new Moon, or of the Sab-*

* According to the Cambridge MS. of the Gospels, our Saviour had declared it, in this Point, before him. For at the End of Luke vi. 5. it hath these Words, both in the Greek and Latin. "The same Day, seeing a certain Man working on the Sabbath, he said to him; Man, if thou knowest what thou dost, thou art blessed: but if thou knowest not, thou art cursed, and a Transgressor of the Law."

bath Days[y]; which Words are comprehenſive enough to repeal the patriarchal Sabbath Day, as well as the Jewiſh, (which however was doubtleſs chiefly intended,) if indeed the former was different from that, which Chriſtians now obſerve. Again, the ſame Apoſtle, blaming the Galatians for *deſiring to be ſtill under Bondage to the weak and poor Elements* of the old Diſpenſation, ſaith: *Ye obſerve Days and Months and Times and Years: I am afraid, leſt I have beſtowed on you Labour in vain*[z]. This Paſſage, in its full Latitude, (which there appears no Neceſſity of reſtraining,) implies, that all preceding Appointments of this Kind were under Chriſtianity null and void.

Still we read in the Hiſtory of our Saviour's Sufferings, that the Women, which had followed him, *returned* after *beholding his Sepulchre, and reſted the Sabbath Day*, that is, the ſeventh Day of the Week, *according to the Commandment**. But this by no Means proves, that reſting on the Saturday was to continue as much a Duty after his Death, as before: though doubtleſs it was a Duty as yet, with reſpect to

[y] Col. ii. 14, 16. Concerning this Text, ſee Mede. Diſc. 15. p. 57.

[z] Gal. iv. 9, 10, 11. * Luke xxiii. 55, 56.

Them,

Them, and probably the reſt of his Diſciples too; becauſe the Abolition of it was not as yet made known to them. Nor indeed would it have been allowable for them, if they had known it, to offend the Jews, at ſo critical a Time, by a ſeeming Tranſgreſſion in ſo favourite an Article. It muſt be owned alſo, that our bleſſed Redeemer directs his Followers, when the approaching Troubles of *Judea* ſhould come on, to *pray that their Flight* from them *might not be in the Winter, neither on the Sabbath Day*[a]. But he did not mean, that it would be unlawful to fly on the latter, more than in the former; but inconvenient only, which it certainly would: becauſe the Jews, who had ſought to kill him for doing Miracles on that Day, would aſſuredly, when his Diſciples travelled upon it, though for the Preſervation of their Lives, afford them no Accommodations; but impute, and, if they could, puniſh it, as a Crime. It muſt be owned laſtly, that the Apoſtles frequented the Synagogues on the Sabbath, that is, the Saturday: but only with a View of converting the Jews to Chriſtianity, not at all of conforming themſelves to Judaiſm, otherwiſe than by Way of prudent Condeſcen-

[a] Matth. xxiv. 20.

ſion. From the ſame Motive, and from a Spirit of abundant Piety, no ſmall Part of the primitive Chriſtians alſo continued for ſome Ages paying Honour to the Jewiſh Sabbath; yet declared expreſsly all the while, that they looked on the Obligation of it as totally expired with the reſt of the Law: on which Account, though they held religious Aſſemblies on that Day, yet they worked on it too.

But though the poſitive and ceremonial Part of the Moſaic Law is aboliſhed, yet the moral and natural Precepts remain in full Force. And the ten Commandments being delivered in a Manner ſo peculiar to themſelves, and having ſuch peculiar Notice taken of them both in the Old Teſtament and the New, have been always deemed in the Church of Chriſt a Summary of moral Duties. Accordingly, our Church hath placed them as ſuch, both in the Catechiſm and Communion Service; the latter of which directs us, after the Recital of the fourth, as well as the reſt, to ſay, *Lord have Mercy upon us, and incline our Hearts to keep this Law.* But ſome will aſk, If we are bound to keep it, why are we not bound to keep the Day ſpecified in it, the laſt of the Week? The Anſwer is, that two Things are to be conſidered:

the

the general Intention of the Commandment, and the particular Means, by which it appoints that Intention to be executed. So far as its general Intention goes, which is to set apart from worldly Business a competent Portion of Time for religious Uses, it was ever discoverable by Reason, and binding to all Men. So far as it appoints this Portion to be one Day in seven, it was always binding, where it could be known; and directs only to what the Christian Church hath constantly observed, and prays with much Reason to observe it rightly. Now many learned Men have conceived it to direct nothing farther: apprehending, that the Obligation, which the Jews were under to keep the Day which they do, did not arise from the Words of the fourth Commandment; (for that, they think, would be equally obeyed by keeping statedly any one Day of the seven;) but proceeded from God's Determination, made in the Wilderness, which one Day theirs should be, by causing a double Quantity of Manna to fall on the preceding, and none on that. If this be so, we observe the Whole of the Commandment as literally as they. But if it prescribes, not only some one Day in each Week, but particularly the last Day: then the Prayer, that God would

incline our Hearts to keep it, muſt be underſtood with this Limitation, ſo far as we are concerned in it; that is, ſo far as it relates to one Day in ſeven, not to the laſt Day of the Week: which Limitation the Compoſers of the Prayer muſt certainly have deſigned; for it is notorious, that none of them thought Saturday was to be kept holy. And indeed the ten Commandments have other Things in them, peculiar to the Jews, as well as this. Such is the Deſcription, *that brought thee out of the Land of Egypt, out of the Houſe of Bondage*: and the Promiſe, *that thy Days may be long in the Land, which the Lord thy God giveth thee*. Now we are not concerned at all in the Peculiarities, even of this Part of the Moſaic Diſpenſation: but, to ſpeak in the Words of one of our Homilies [b], *Whatever is found in the fourth Commandment, appertaining to the Law of Nature, ought to be retained of Chriſtians*. Now the Law of Nature enjoins only a due and convenient Proportion of Time to be kept holy. And ſuppoſing that Proportion to be one Day of Reſt, after ſix of Labour, in Memory of the Creation: we comply with it equally, whether we pitch on

[b] Of the Time and Place of Prayer.

the first, or the last, Day of the Week for that Rest.

But there is one great Advantage in chusing the former, on which the Author of our Salvation rested from the Labours of his State of Humiliation, after accomplishing the great Work he had undertaken: that thus we very fitly join the thankful Memorial of the new Creation, (for so is our Redemption called in Scripture[c],) with that of the old. Nor doth our Observation of the Day stand, by any Means, on this Propriety alone: but on such other plain and strong Authorities, as I shall now proceed to set before you.

Every single Evangelist begins his Account of our Saviour's Resurrection with observing, that it was *on the first Day of the Week*. Now it had been perfectly needless for any one of them to have done this, and very unlikely that all of them should, had the Day been intended for no particular Use. But evidently it was: and for what Use, appears immediately. For on that very same Day we find the Apostles assembled, and Jesus in the Midst of them, instructing them with his own Mouth[d]. The first Day of the very next Week we find them

[c] 2 Cor. v. 17. Eph. ii. 10. iv. 24. [d] John xx. 19.

assembled again, and our Lord again with them[e]. Six Weeks after, at Pentecost, is recorded in the Acts, a third Instance of *all* the Apostles at least, being *with one Accord*, on that Day, *in one Place*, where *they were filled with the Holy Ghost*[f]. Farther yet, the same Book informs us, that *on the first Day of the Week, when the Disciples came together to break Bread*, to receive the holy Sacrament, *Paul preached to them*[g]. And that great Apostle himself directs the Corinthians, that, *on the first Day of the Week*, every one should lay by, according to his Ability, something for the Poor[h]: which Example of Piety succeeding Ages imitated, by charitable Contributions in their weekly Assemblies. Now if any Person can possibly imagine, that this Day was so frequently specified in this Manner by mere Accident, let him only reflect, that throughout the whole History of the first Christians in the New Testament, no other Day is ever specified, as any Way peculiarly regarded by them.

But farther still, St. *John*, in the *Revelation*, calls it the Lord's Day. I *was in the Spirit on the Lord's Day*[i]. For that he means by that

[e] John xx. 26. [f] Acts ii 1, 4. [g] Acts xx. 7.
[h] 1 Cor. xvi. 1, 2. [i] Rev. i. 10.

Phrase

Phraſe what we do now, is clear from hence, that St. *Ignatius*, exhorting to the due Obſervation of this Day, within a few Years after him, uſed it in that Senſe[k]; as did the whole Body of ſubſequent Fathers, Councils, Laws and Hiſtories: and no one, ſo far as appears, ever uſed it in any other. This Day then hath the ſame Mark in St. *John*, that the bleſſed Sacrament hath in St. *Paul*, of being appropriated to the Honour of our Saviour. The former is called the *Lord's Day*, juſt as the latter is, the *Lord's Supper*. And accordingly the Epiſtle of St. *Barnabas*, written perhaps before the *Revelation*, ſaith, *We obſerve with Gladneſs the eighth Day, on which Jeſus roſe from the Dead*[l]: confeſſedly meaning by the eighth, the next after the ſeventh, in our common Language the firſt. Nor is there a ſingle Inſtance, from the earlieſt Times downwards for 1500 Years, of any Church or Sect of Believers whatever, that did not profeſs keeping it holy to him. For what St. *Paul* ſaith, that *one Man eſteemed one Day above another, and another eſteemed every Day alike*[m], plainly relates to the keeping of the Jewiſh Feſtivals, which was greatly contro-

[k] Ign. ad Magneſ. §. 9.

[l] Ep. Barnab. §. 15.

[m] Rom xiv. 5.

verted

verted at that Time, not of this Christian Festival, about which there was no Controversy at all.

Now such universal Consent, without Exception, amongst Persons who differed so widely about Multitudes of other Matters, could not but proceed from some original Injunction, either of our Lord or his Apostles. No Authority besides theirs was early or extensive enough to be a Ground of the Practice: and we cannot well think it was taken up without any Authority, for this Reason besides others, that if it had, some ancient Council would undoubtedly have placed it on a surer Foundation. But no Council ever pretended to establish the Observation of this Day: which, far from lowering its Obligation, heightens it very much; by shewing, that the Rulers of the Church all along knew it to have been established from the Beginning by a superior Power*. And therefore they contented themselves to enforce the Regard due to it, and determine particular Doubts concerning it, from Time to Time. The New Testament indeed doth not

* Quod universa tenet Ecclesia, nec Conciliis institutum, sed semper retentum est, non nisi Auctoritate Apostolica traditum rectissime creditur. Aug. de Bapt. contra Donatistas, l. 4. c. 23.

say,

ſay, that our Saviour appointed it. But St. *Luke* ſaith in the Acts, that after his Reſurrection he converſed with the Apoſtles forty Days, *ſpeaking* to them *of Things pertaining to the Kingdom of God*[n]: that is, the Goſpel Diſpenſation. And St. *Clement*, the Roman, whom St. *Paul* to the Philippians calls *his Fellow-Labourer, whoſe Name is in the Book of Life*[o], ſaith further, *We ought to do all Things in Order, which the Lord hath commanded: to perform our Offices and Services according to the appointed Seaſons. And he hath commanded them to be done, not at random and diſorderly, but at determinate Seaſons amd Times*[p]. Now what Seaſons can he ſo probably mean, as the Returns of that Day, which bears our Lord's Name: and which later Fathers expreſsly affirm was kept by his Command *. But without any ſuch Evidence; as in the Caſe of the Patriarchs before Moſes, and of the Jews for many Ages after him, though we read nothing in Scripture of the *Obſervance* of the *Sabbath*, yet we pre-

[n] Acts i. 3. [o] Phil. iv. 3. [p] Clem. Rom. Ep. i. §. 40.

* Euſeb. de Laud. Conſt. p. 733. Ed. Reading. Epiphan. Hom. de Reſur. vol. 2. p. 277. ſaith, Chriſt bleſſed and ſanctified the Day of his Reſurrection, referring to God's bleſſing the Sabbath. Auſt. de Civ. Dei, l. 22. c. 30. Ep. 119. c. 13, Athan. de Sabbato.

ſume

sume it from the Institution: so here, in the Case of the first Christians, though we read nothing in Scripture of the *Institution* of the *Lord's Day*, we may presume it from the Observance: just as we do in the Common Law of our own Country; in which Multitudes of Things are proved to be obligatory, not by producing the original Appointment of them, for it is not extant; but by shewing such immemorial Usage, as must have proceeded from an Appointment formerly made by the sovereign Power.

Or supposing that it was not our Saviour in Person, but the Apostles, who instituted the Lord's Day: (as indeed those Christian Writers, which have spoken of it in the lowest Terms, have acknowledged, that it began to be observed not only with their Approbation, but by their Authority[q]:) this will come very nearly to the same Thing. For the Apostles were such, as could say, *It hath seemed good to the Holy Ghost and to Us*[r]. Nor could they design it for a temporary Institution, since the Reasons of it are so evidently perpetual. But even suppose it had been only taken up with the joint Consent of the Christian Church: yet St. *Paul* would have

[q] Heylin, p. 32. [r] Acts xv. 28.

thought

thought it a ſufficient Anſwer to all, who ſhould have pleaded for treating it with Diſreſpect, that if *any Man be contentious, we have no ſuch Cuſtom, neither the Churches of God*[s]. Suppoſe it had been only enjoined by the *Governors* of the Church, yet the Direction of Scripture is, *Obey them, that have the Rule over you, and ſubmit yourſelves: for they watch for your Souls*[t]. Suppoſe our *Temporal* Governors had required us to reverence it, as they have moſt ſtrictly; here again, the Direction of Scripture is, *Let every Soul be ſubject unto the higher Powers, not only for Wrath, but for Conſcience ſake: for they are God's Miniſters*[u]. And as we confeſs ourſelves bound by their Command to keep occaſional Faſts and Thankſgivings, on account of our worldly Concerns, why not a ſtated Thankſgiving for Bleſſings infinitely ſuperior? But even were the Obſervation of the Day to ſtand ſolely on the Footing of its own Reaſonableneſs and Propriety, yet this is the Proportion of Time, which the Wiſdom of God fixed on for his Servants under the Old Teſtament: and ſince we owe him much more than They did, why ſhould we pay him leſs, of any Token of pious Gratitude? If the Sabbath was *a Sign*

[s] 1 Cor. xi. 16. [t] Heb. xiii. 17. [u] Rom. xiii. 1, 5, 6.

between

between God and Them [w]; ſo is the Lord's Day a very expreſſive one between Chriſt and Us! and why ſhould we not declare, by this Mark among the reſt, whoſe we are? Nay laſtly, were it grounded merely on its Uſefulneſs to Mankind; ſtill, a Writer, who was never ſuſpected of Prejudice in Favour of Religion, Mr. *Hobbes*, acknowledges that, though the common Opinion of Chriſtians concerning this Day were an Error; yet it would be a happy one, and the contrary Truth ought not to be publiſhed *. And another Author ſince, of the ſame Stamp, hath confeſſed it to be the moſt uſeful of the ſeven †: as indeed I hope hereafter to ſhew you it is, by much better Proofs, than ſuch Teſtimonies. If then any one of theſe Reaſons for keeping it ought ſingly to be of ſuch Weight; only think, how forcible the Influence of them all united ſhould be; how complicated the Guilt of diſregarding them all is, and how dreadful an Opening it muſt give to the Diſregard of every Tye, that we can be under! Think, I ſay, of theſe Things,

w Exod. xxxi. 13, 17.

* Hobbes againſt Bramhal, in Morer on the Lord's Day, p. 238.

† Mandeville, Eſſay on Charity Schools, towards the End.

and

and you will ſee abundant Cauſe, both from religious and worldly Conſiderations, to hold it in Honour, and apply to it the Pſalmiſt's Words, which ſome have apprehended were ſpoken with a prophetic View to its future Inſtitution: *This is the Day, which the Lord hath made: we will rejoice and be glad in it* [x].

[x] Pſ. cxviii. 24.

SERMON XV.

GEN. ii. 3.

And God blessed the Seventh Day, and sanctified it: because that in it he had rested from all his Work, which God created and made.

IN my former Discourse I shewed you on what Authority the Appropriation of one Day in seven to the Purposes of Religion stands. Let us now therefore proceed to consider,

II. In what Manner that Day ought to be spent. And

1. A due Portion of it ought to be employed in public Attendance on the Worship of God, and religious Instruction.

This, it must be owned, is not explicitly mentioned, either in the Text, or in the fourth Commandment; but only comprehended under

the general Phrase of *sanctifying* or hallowing the Sabbath: whereas the Point of Rest is particularly specified. And without Question abstaining from Labour, in Memory of God's completing the Creation of the Heavens and Earth, (which some of the Heathen held to proceed from blind Fate or Chance, whilst others worshipped the principal Parts of them as Deities,) was of itself, without any Thing more, *sanctifying*, that is, devoutly distinguishing the Day, by a practical Declaration upon it of the fundamental Article of true Religion, that an infinitely wise and just and good Being is the Maker and Lord of all Things. And enjoining the Jews afterwards on the same Day to commemorate their miraculous Deliverance from Egyptian Bondage, and allow Refreshment, during the whole of it, not only to their Servants, but their Cattle, must greatly promote amongst them, both thankful Piety, and Tenderness of Heart. But still we cannot well imagine, that they were left at Liberty to throw away all this Leisure just as they pleased: when the very Reason of appointing it led them so naturally to employ it well; and when, if they did not, many of them would of course employ it very ill.

Besides, the Law of *Moses* directed, that the seventh Day should be a *holy Convocation* or Assembly, as well as a Sabbath of Rest[a]: and allotted to the Priests and Levites 48 Cities in different Parts of the Land[b]: from whence they might with more Convenience go to perform religious Offices in every Quarter; particularly that of instructing the People, which *Moses* expressly assigns to their whole Tribe: *They shall teach Jacob thy Judgements, and Israel thy Law*[c]. Accordingly *Philo* * and *Josephus* †, who both lived in the same Age with our Saviour, say, their Lawgiver appointed his Law to be read and expounded, in public Assemblies, for the Improvement of the Hearers,

[a] Lev. xxiii. Comp. Numb. x. 2. Isa. iv. 5.
[b] Numb. xxxv. 1—8. Josh. xxi. 1—8. [c] Deut. xxxiii. 10.

* De Septenario p. 282. See also de Vit. Mos. l. 3. p. 167. where he saith the Jews were to spend the Sabbath εν ἱλαραις ευθυμιαις — σχολαζοντας ουχ, ως ενιοι, γελωσιν, η παιδιαις, η μιμων η ορχηστων επιδειξεσι, — αλλα μονω τω φιλοσοφειν — Τα γαρ κατα πολεις προσευκτηρια τι ἑτερον εστιν, η διδασκαλεια φρονησεως ϗ ανδριας ϗ σωφροσυνης ϗ δικαιοσυνης, ευσεβειας τε ϗ ὁσιοτητος ϗ συμπασης αρετης. See also de Dec. Orac. p. 197. & de Mundi Opificio, p. 30. & Lib. Quis Rerum, &c. p. 497. Τεταρτος δε περι της αει παρθενου ϗ αμητορος εβδομαδος, ἱνα την απραξιαν αυτης μελετωσα γινωσι, εις μνημην του αορατως παντα δρωντος ερχηται.

† Contr. Ap. l. 2. §. 17.

every ſeventh Day: which is very conſiſtent with the more ſolemn reading of it, appointed by him every ſeventh Year, at the general Meeting of the whole People[d]. And St. *James* alſo ſaith, *Moſes of old Time hath, in every City, them that preach him, being read in the Synagogues every Sabbath Day*[e]. Still it muſt be confeſſed, that this Practice is no where in the Old Teſtament expreſsly either preſcribed, or ſaid to be obſerved: and therefore we may doubt, whether it became conſtant and univerſal very early. However we find there, that good Perſons uſually reſorted to the Prophets, (doubtleſs for Inſtruction,) on the Sabbath Day[f]. We find a Complaint, that the Enemies of the Jews *had burnt up all the Synagogues of God in the Land*[g]: which, by this Expreſſion, muſt have been pretty numerous. We find a Promiſe, that *upon every Dwelling-Place of Mount Zion, and upon her Aſſemblies, there ſhall be a Glory and a Defence*[h]. We find the Levites mentioned, more than once, as thoſe who *taught the good Knowledge of the Lord to all Iſrael*[i]. When they had been *for a long Seaſon*

[d] Deut. xxxi. 10, 13. [e] Acts xvi. 21. [f] 2 Kings iv. 23.
[g] Pſ. lxxiv. 8. [h] Iſ. iv. 5. [i] 2 Chr. xxx. 22. xxxv. 3.

without

without a teaching Priest, and without the Law, it is represented as a dreadful Instance of national Misery[k]. And when better Times are foretold in another Book, Part of the Description is, that *from one new Moon to another, and from one Sabbath to another, all Flesh should come to worship before God*[l].

On tbe Return from the Captivity, this Prediction was verified. And so good were the Effects of the stated public Worship and Teaching, which thenceforward obtained more generally than before, that even had it first begun then, it had deserved to continue through all future Ages. For Idolatry, which nothing had hitherto been able to overcome, was intirely abolished by it: the Nation grew more virtuous, as well as pious; and enjoyed more Tranquillity, than in any preceding Time. Sojourners in *Judea*, and Inhabitants of other Countries, into which they were dispersed, attending their Synagogues, as we find in the New Testament they did, partook of a Blessing, which the wisest of their Law-givers and Philosophers had not provided for them: and Multitudes of the Heathen were converted to the one true God. Indeed about the Time of our Saviour's Ap-

[k] 2 Chr. xv. 3. [l] If. lxvi. 23.

pearance, (as every Thing good is apt to degenerate amongſt Men,) this excellent Inſtitution was become an Inſtrument of ſome Superſtition and Uncharitableneſs, as well as much Good. But that only increaſed the Neceſſity of uſing it under due Regulations; that it might cure, by its proper Influence, thoſe Evils, which it had cauſed by accidental Abuſe. And therefore He firſt reformed it, then by his Apoſtles eſtabliſhed it throughout the World; and provided for its being carried on to all Ages: and ever ſince, the principal Seaſon for inſtructing Mankind hath been this Day.

On this Day, from the very Birth of Chriſtianity, as we read in the Acts, *the Diſciples came together to break Bread*[m]: that is, to receive the Lord's Supper. With their breaking of Bread, we read alſo, they joined *the Apoſtle's Doctrine and Prayer*[n]. Nor was this an Act of mere voluntary Piety, but a Duty ſtrictly binding. For they were commanded *not to forſake the aſſembling themſelves together*[o], when the utmoſt Dangers attended the Practice. For the Service of theſe Aſſemblies peculiarly the Chriſtian Miniſtry was inſtituted: in theſe the

[m] Act xx. 7. [n] Acts ii 42. [o] Heb. 10. 25.

Chriſtian

Chriſtian Sacraments were celebrated: good Chriſtians were to be admitted into them, bad ones excluded from them. Indeed the Whole New Teſtament conſiders the Followers of Chriſt, not as ſingle unconnected Believers, but as Churches or Societies, meeting together for the Honour of God, and their mutual Edification. And this they did ſo conſtantly, even in the Days of the bittereſt Perſecution, that *Pliny*, a Heathen Magiſtrate, writing, within a few Years after the Death of St. *John*, to the Emperor *Trajan*, for Directions how to proceed in puniſhing them, deſcribes them by their Cuſtom of holding Congregations on a ſtated Day to worſhip Chriſt, and bind themſelves by a Sacrament, or Oath, to commit no Wickedneſs *. Again, about 40 Years after him, *Juſtin Martyr*, in a Defence of them, when perſecuted by another Heathen Emperor, gives the following Account of their Obſervation of Sunday. For though that Name is undoubtedly ſuperſtitious in its Origin, as Monday and all the reſt are, yet the early Chriſtians uſed it without Scruple †, both becauſe they were not underſtood by it to have a ſuperſtitious Meaning, and becauſe they could alledge a better

* Plin. lib. x. Ep 97. † Tert. Apol. c. 16.

Ground for it, than the Idolaters, (which accordingly some ancient Fathers did*,) that then Christ, *the Sun of Righteousness, rose*[p] from the Grave, and shone forth with new Lustre. *On the Day called Sunday,* therefore, saith *Justin, all of us, whether we live in the City or the Country, meet in one Place: where the Writings of the Apostles and Prophets are read, an Exhortation to live suitably to them is made by the President of the Assembly, and we offer up our joint Prayers. Then Bread and Wine is brought: and after repeated Prayers and Praises by the President, to which the People answer, Amen, it is distributed throughout the Congregation; and Alms are collected, and left in the President's Hands for the Use of the Poor.* After which he adds, *The Reason, why we all meet on Sundays, is, that this is the first Day, in which God created the World, and on which our Saviour Jesus Christ rose from the Dead* †.

Such was the Obedience of the first Christians to the Rules of the Gospel, though the Laws of Men punished it with Death: whereas we, who call ourselves Christians too, and live in a Time, when God and Man require the

* Hieron. in Ps. cxviii. 24. Ambros. Serm. 60. Tom. v. P. 81. Ed. Par.

p Mal. iv. 2.

† Apol. 1. § 67.

same

ſame Thing, diſobey both. And the Conſequence hath been, that whereas Their Zeal filled them with all Piety and Virtue, and converted the World to true Religion; our Lukewarmneſs hath made us negligent and bad in the Whole of our Conduct, and we are relapſing into the Profligacy and Atheiſm of the Pagans. For how indeed is it poſſible, that Men ſhould know their Duty without being inſtructed, or regard it without being admoniſhed? And what other ſufficient Inſtruction or Admonition will the Generality of thoſe have, who deſpiſe That, which the Word of God hath eſtabliſhed for them? The Church is the univerſal School, opened on this Day by the Divine Command, for teaching all Men Reverence to their Maker, Love to their Fellow-Creatures, moral Government of themſelves; right and worthy and exemplary Behaviour in every Part of public and private Life. We appeal to your Conſciences, whether theſe Things are not faithfully taught here: and if they be, whether it is not of the laſt Importance, that the Teaching of them be conſtantly frequented?

Many Pleas and Excuſes are made on this Head: but none will avail for the voluntary Omiſſion of what God hath appointed. Think then with your own Hearts: Hath he not ap-

pointed

pointed public Prayers and Preaching? And if he hath, why are not you to attend them? Some, who do, perhaps you will ſay, are not the better for it. But how can you know that? They might be ſtill worſe without it. Or ſuppoſing they are not better, if others are, (as undoubtedly Multitudes are) why may not you hope to be ſo too? They who fail of it, fail through their own Faults. Do you avoid thoſe Faults: and you may juſtly promiſe yourſelf much Good from what, on many Accounts, is ſo likely to *do* Good. Perhaps you do not ſee this great Likelihood. But is it not want of thinking, or of thinking fairly, that hinders you from ſeeing what to others is moſt evident? Or though you were incapable of ſeeing it, which is wiſer, You or your Lord and Maſter?

Poſſibly however you admit, that Preaching may be of Service to the ignorant part of Mankind, but apprehend it can inform You of nothing needful, which you do not already know. But are you indeed, after conſidering the Point with Impartiality and Humility, quite ſure of this? Or if you were, can you be reminded of nothing you did not think of? excited to nothing you did not practiſe? confirmed in nothing you do practiſe? receive no Benefit of

any Kind? Why yes: there are Preachers, from whom, now and then, ſome Degree of rational Entertainment may be expected: and ſuch, when Occaſion offers, you are willing to hear. But is their any Preacher, from whom you can fail to hear Things of the greateſt Moment to your preſent and eternal Happineſs; which, by laying hold of you juſt at that Moment, may be the Means of your eſcaping Miſery in both Worlds? And is not this your main Concern, in Compariſon of which, not only Entertainment, but Information in other Matters, is a mere Trifle? Beſides, is hearing the Preacher the chief Inducement that ſhould bring you hither? Far from it. It is hearing the Word of God in the Leſſons: it is paying Adoration to God in the Prayers and Pſalms and Hymns. If you attend not to theſe, you will partake of little real Benefit from the Sermon; and if you attend as you ought to theſe, you will never go back without Improvement, though there be no Sermon at all; and you may improve very much by the meaneſt that is delivered. For that depends, not on human Performances, but on the Divine Bleſſing. What doth the great Apoſtle himſelf ſay of his own Preaching, and that of his Companions? *Who then is Paul, and who is Apollos, but*

Miniſters

Miniſters by whom ye believed, even as the Lord gave to every Man? I have planted: Apollos watered: but God gave the Increaſe. So then neither is He, that planteth, any Thing; neither He, that watereth: but God, that giveth the Increaſe [p]. Therefore wait on God for it conſtantly, in the Ordinances, which he hath inſtituted; for you know not by whom he will ſend it: perhaps by the weakeſt Inſtrument he hath; *that*, as the ſame Apoſtle ſpeaks, *the Excellency of the Power may be of Him, and not of Us* [q]. Our bleſſed Lord aſſures all his Diſciples, that *where two or three are gathered together in his Name, there is He in the midſt of them* [r]. And if He be there; it matters little, who elſe is not.

Still probably ſome of you will aſk, Why ſhould the Bleſſing of God peculiarly follow public Prayers and Sermons, when you can make uſe of the ſame, or better, at Home? But if you can, is it true that you do: and that you do it ſtatedly? If not, this is only a poor Attempt to deceive others and yourſelves. But ſuppoſing you do: may not God with Juſtice try your Obedience, by directing in what Method you ſhall apply for his Favours?

[p] 1 Cor. iii. 5, 6, 7. [q] 2 Cor. iv. 7. [r] Matth. xviii. 20.

And

And may he not, with great Wiſdom, direct to This Method? Unleſs Mankind be taught to worſhip and obey the Sovereign Lord of all, they muſt be wicked and miſerable. The Generality cannot ſufficiently learn in private to do this: and moſt of the Remainder will not. Without ſome farther Care, the lower Sort will be abſolute Barbarians: and the upper, much worſe, than they now are. Therefore God requires all to aſſemble for Inſtruction. Were he to make Exceptions; every one, that pleaſed, would imagine or pretend Himſelf to be excepted. Therefore he preſcribes it even to thoſe, who may ſeem to need it leaſt: but who in Truth need his Grace, as much as any. If they will condeſcend to ſet a good Example in this reſpect to others, they ſhall be rewarded for it by ſpiritual Benefits conferred on themſelves. If they will not, the Haughtineſs of their fancied Wiſdom ſhall be puniſhed by withdrawing the Divine Influences from them. And what is there, in this Procedure, unworthy of God, who *reſiſteth the Proud, but giveth Grace unto the Humble* [s]?

But here ſome of the upper Part of the World will reply, that they acknowledge the

[s] James iv. 6. 1 Pet. v. 5.

Neceſſity

Neceſſity of ſetting a good Example: and therefore, amongſt their Neighbours and Dependents in the Country, they do go to Church on Sunday. But is it there only, that Example is neceſſary? Or is it not, if poſſible, more neceſſary in this wicked Town than any where elſe? Doth not your Family here, ſee your Neglect of your Duty to God, and learn from thence to neglect their Duty, both to Him and You. Do not your Neighbours and Dependents in the Country hear of your Behaviour when abſent from them? And will they not very naturally conclude, that if you worſhip your Maker only at ſome Times and Places, it is from no Principle of Conſcience that you worſhip him at any?

But others will probably alledge, that they would be much more regular and conſtant than they are, if it were not for frequent Hindrances, which intervene, and prevent them. But do you not often throw theſe Hindrances in your own Way? At leaſt, could you not eaſily, if you would, remove them out of your Way? Buſineſs perhaps, that might be let alone, is done; or what might, with a little Forecaſt, be well enough diſpatched at other times, is reſerved for Sunday; or what might be finiſhed

before Church Time, is delayed till then; or what one Perſon might manage, keeps ſeveral at home. And do you think this fitting, and will it be thought ſo at the laſt day, that every Thing elſe ſhould be preferred before the moſt weighty of all Things? That you ſhould make Excuſes for not ſerving your Creator, which you would be aſhamed to make in any other Caſe, and can hardly make in This with a ſerious Countenance! *Be not deceived: God is not mocked* [t].

Some however will urge, that Care of their Health at leaſt is a ſerious Plea: and that, during the Winter Seaſon, they cannot attend public Worſhip, without Hazard of it. Now unqueſtionably, where this is really ſo, God *will have Mercy and not Sacrifice* [u]. But do not theſe ſame People venture to expoſe their Healths, on any Day of the Week beſides, perhaps on ſome Part of this very Day, to much greater Hazards, in Places, to which they have much leſs Call? And why then will they attempt in vain to blind others and themſelves with this Pretence?

But a ſtill farther Allegation is, that, could they come to Church ever ſo ſafely, they can-

[t] Gal. vi. 7. [u] Matth. ix. 13. xii. 7.

not poſſibly: they have no Accommodations there. Would God all, who have, would conſtantly uſe them! But were they, who alledge that they have not, to ſpeak their Hearts: Are they glad to make this Excuſe, or are they ſorry? If the former, it is not a ſincere one. If the latter, I heartily wiſh, that, where they are wanted, more Places of Worſhip were built. Some of theſe Perſons could do a great deal towards this: and probably they ſpend their Money by no Means ſo well. But at preſent there is Room, for the Poor without any Expence, for the Rich at very little Expence, even in this Town, at one time or another of the Day, either at their own Church, or ſome Church or Chapel very near them.

But the Hours of Church are inconvenient. And whoſe Fault is it, that they are become ſo? We have not made them earlier: but theſe Complainers have made theirs abſurdly later. Why will they not, on this Day at leaſt, alter them back to what they were formerly? Do they not often bear with the Inconvenience of as great or greater Changes on very ſlight Occaſions? Why then muſt a Change be thought impracticable or inſupportable, in order to

attend upon God and his Word? Reflect a little, how very low your Esteem of him must be, if you think this too much to submit to on his Account. Indeed they, who do attend public Worship on the former part of the Day, should remember that it is equally appointed, equally useful on the latter also; and should dispose their Family-Affairs in such a Manner, as to be present (so many of them as can,) at each: applying to their Devotions that Rule, which the wise Man lays down concerning their Charity: *In the morning sow thy Seed, and in the Evening withhold not thine Hand: For thou knowest not, whether shall prosper, either this or that: or whether they both shall be alike good* [*].

And as all Ranks of Men are jointly concerned in the Duty of frequenting Divine Offices: all should allow their Servants, and those with whom they have Concerns, Leisure for it. If they desire Leisure for this Purpose, refusing it is most shocking Cruelty: and not contriving for it, is criminal in the next Degree. But even though they do not desire it; exhorting, disposing, pressing them to it, nay insisting upon it, so far as we have Authority, is Matter both of Conscience and Prudence.

* Eccl. xi. 6.

But now, from the public Exercises of Religion, I proceed,

2. To the private ones, requisite on the Lord's Day.

If, before we come to the Congregation, we think of nothing serious; or as soon as we leave it, lay aside out of our Minds every Thing, that we have said and heard and felt there: we must expect to be little the better for our Attendance. And a principal Cause, why Men are commonly so very little the better, is the latter of these two great Faults. Our Saviour himself hath told us: *When any one heareth the Word of the Kingdom, and considereth it not,* (for so we should translate) *then cometh the Wicked one; and immediately catcheth away that, which was sown in his Heart. This is He, that receiveth Seed by the Way-side*[r]. Since therefore hearing God's Word is a Duty of the Day, That Preparation for it beforehand, and Reflexion upon it afterwards, which are necessary to give it Root within us, must be so too. And let us ask our Consciences, Do we practise both? Do we consider on the Morning of the Lord's Day, for what excellent Ends it was distinguished from others; how carefully

[r] Matth. xiii. 19. Mark iv. 15.

we ought to *keep our Feet*, as the Wife Man expreffes it, *when we go to the Houfe of God*[z]; and what a Sin we fhall be guilty of, and what a Lofs we fhall fuffer, if we regard only outward Form, and neglect inward Improvement? Do we again, after Church, take the firft convenient Opportunity for retiring into ourfelves: for thinking impartially, what is the proper Ufe to make of all that hath been delivered to us; for determining, that we will make it, without Lofs of Time, and for intreating the Affiftance of Heaven, that we may: or are we glad to get rid of fuch unwelcome Ideas, by any Method, the firft Moment that we are able? And if our Behaviour hath been blameable in this Refpect hitherto, fhall it be better for the future? And will we *give*, as the Apoftle directs, *more earneft Heed to the Things, which we have heard, left we let them flip*[a]?

But, befides the particular Subjects, that have happened to be laid before us at Church, we have need to confider frequently at home the general State of our Hearts and Lives, and what we have to hope or fear from it, here and hereafter. Such Inquiries may indeed be made

[z] Eccl. v. 1. [a] Heb. ii. 1.

on other Days: and the oftener, the better. But is it likely they will, if they are omitted on that Day, which is peculiarly proper for them, and on which we are continually reminded of them? Some have little Time elſe for any deliberate Self-Examination: none can have a fitter Time: why then ſhould any one throw it away? Is there nothing you have need to learn or amend? Perhaps there is ſo much, that you are afraid to ſet about thinking of it. If ſo, your only way is to ſet about it inſtantly. Every other Remedy will increaſe the Diſeaſe: this alone will remove it. But perhaps you cannot think to good Purpoſe long together. Do then to good Purpoſe what you can: bring yourſelf gradually to more: uſe pious Books for your Aſſiſtance. Perhaps they ſeem flat, and void of Entertainment: but perhaps alſo, it is your Fault that they do. Or if that were otherwiſe, is it not ſufficient that by them you are inſtructed, exhorted, warned, reproved, when you want it? There is no Pleaſure in this. But did you never perſiſt in applying to any Thing, which at firſt gave you no Pleaſure? And ſhould it not be the greateſt Pleaſure to conquer your Sins, to advance in Goodneſs? Poſſibly in ſome of theſe

Books

Books you meet with Expreſſions now and then, which appear unelegant and ſingular: and they excite ludicrous Ideas in your Minds inſtead of ſerious ones. But poſſibly too this may proceed intirely from your own Ignorance, or wrong Diſpoſition. For the Authors of many of them were Men of both as good Underſtanding, and as good Breeding, as any, either in their own Times, or the preſent. Or ſuppoſe the Defect to be theirs: yet ſurely, in other Caſes, you never ſlight uſeful Information or Direction, becauſe it is accompanied by a few Peculiarities: and why ſhould you in this?

But it may be your Hindrance is of a different Kind. You are afraid, that employing regularly Part of your Sunday's Leiſure thus, will expoſe you to Ridicule, as formal ſuperſtitious Wretches. And have you no Fear on the other Side then, that employing it idly will expoſe you to Cenſure, as irreligious and profane Wretches? Beſides, there is no Occaſion for all Perſons to know, how your Time is ſpent. Or if they did, are you to make the Opinion, or perhaps only the pretended Opinion of every inconſiderate Creature, the Rule of your Life? Think, how far that would

carry you. And if what they are pleaſed to call Superſtition, or Preciſeneſs, will lead you to every Thing Right and Good; and the Neglect of it will lead to the contrary: be not aſhamed of it for a few reproachful Names; but ſecure to your private Uſe, without aiming to be remarkable in doing it, a Share of the Lord's Day, proportioned to what your Caſe requires, and your Circumſtances admit: improve your Minds in religious Knowledge by reading; improve your Hearts in religious Affections by Meditation and Prayer; guard your Steps by firm but prudent Reſolutions: and let neither imaginary nor ſmall Impediments keep you from this. At leaſt make it an uſual Practice: but, if poſſible, a conſtant one. For the oftener you omit it, the ſtronger Temptation you will be under to lay it aſide: and the more ſtatedly you perform it, the ſurer you will be of receiving, not only much Benefit, but, after a while, much Comfort from it.

Till you take the proper Care of your own Behaviour on the Lord's Day, it muſt be with an ill Grace, and with ſmall Succeſs, that you can attempt to regulate that of Perſons belonging to you, though it concerns you very much,

on more Accounts than a few. And therefore you ought to be religious, for this Reason amongst weightier, to make them so. But to be so Yourself and neglect Them, is wonderfully inconsistent. And yet many, whose Sincerity in Religion one dares not question, suffer their Servants, if not their Children, to live without any Regard to it, or any Knowledge of it: as if they were totally indifferent, both about their future Happiness, and their own present Interest. Very often they have not the Shadow of an Excuse to make for this Inattention. Sometimes Business is pleaded. But on Sundays, at least, there must or should be Leisure: and it is both unwise and wicked to spend it in Trifling or Indolence, to the Omission of so important a Care: which consequently is one of the private Duties of the Day. Hear the Injunction of God to the Jews, which cannot be less in Force among Christians. *The Words, which I command thee, shall be in thine Heart: and thou shall teach them diligently unto thy Children; and thou shalt talk of them when thou sittest in thine House, and when thou walkest by the Way, and when thou liest down, and when thou risest up* [b]. This doth not mean,

[b] Deut. vi. 6, 7.

that

that our Converſation ſhould be of nothing beſides Religion: but it muſt mean, that Religion ſhould have a due Share in it; and doubtleſs then a peculiar Share on the Day, which God hath hallowed. Employing a Part of that in giving thoſe about you the obvious Proofs of Chriſtianity, juſt Notions of the Holineſs of the Divine Law, and their Need of a Redeemer and a Sanctifier, Inſtruction in their various Duties to God and Man and themſelves, joyful Expectations of the Rewards of Piety, awful Apprehenſions of the Conſequences of Sin, affectionate Cautions againſt the Dangers, to which they are expoſed, will be a moſt improving Exerciſe to yourſelves, and afford you the moſt rational Proſpect of gaining an uſeful Influence over them, to your own Comfort, and to their Good in this Life and the next. Your Children are Part of yourſelves: All, who depend on you, are placed under your Inſpection. You complain perhaps of both. Why then will you not uſe the Opportunity of this Day to remedy what you complain of? In all likelihood they will be much the worſe for the Day, unleſs you endeavour to make them the better. You cannot indeed be ſure of prevailing with them. But if you do

your

your beſt in a prudent manner, and engage others to do what you cannot ſo properly do in Perſon, you will not fail of being able to ſay in general, *As for me, and my Houſe, we will ſerve the Lord*[c]. They, who have never been vicious, may uſually with Eaſe be made religious, by good Advice and good Books, a regular example ſet them, and a good-natured Watchfulneſs over them. The very worſt may be either reſtrained or removed; perhaps may be reformed. And how excellent an Uſe of the Day this would be, I ſhall leave upon your Thoughts in the Words of Scripture: *He which converteth a Sinner from the Error of his Way, ſhall ſave a Soul from Death, and hide a Multitude of Sins*[d].

[c] Joſh. xxiv. 15.   [d] James v. 20.

SERMON XVI.

GEN. ii. 3.

And God bleſſed the Seventh Day, and ſanctified it: becauſe that in it he had reſted from all his Work, which God created and made.

HAVING propoſed from theſe Words to ſhew,

I. On what Authority the Appropriation of one Day in ſeven to the Purpoſes of Religion ſtands;

II. In what Manner that Day ought to be ſpent:

I have, in two Diſcourſes, finiſhed the former of theſe Heads, and made ſome Entrance on the latter: under which I have conſidered our Obligations,

1. To

1. To attend public Worſhip and Inſtruction on this Day:

2. To ſpend a due Portion of it in the more private Exercifes of Piety. And now I proceed to another Duty; which is,

3. To reſt from Labour.

This indeed is not ſo ſtrictly required of Chriſtians on the Lord's Day, as it was of Jews on the Sabbath: to whom not only the fourth Commandment prohibited Work in general Terms, but further and more particular Prohibitions were given, and the Whole moſt ſeverely inforced, in other parts of their Law, as I have already obſerved to you. Nor would milder Injunctions have ſuited the Nature of the People: which required them to be treated, as St. *Paul* takes Notice, like Children under Age, or Bond-Servants [a]: to whom Rules are always preſcribed more minutely, and a more punctual Obſervance of them is expected, and harſher Puniſhments are inflicted, than after they are grown up to Years of greater Diſcretion, and more capable of being truſted to themſelves. Indeed the moſt rigorous Precautions proved inſufficient, to make that wayward Nation regard, long together, almoſt any

[a] Gal. iv. 1—11.

Part of their Religion, before the Captivity, and to enforce the Observance of the Sabbath even after it [b]. But as Profaneness and Superstition very naturally prepare the Way for each other; so when at Length they had recovered from the former, they fell into the latter: and some would not so much as defend their Lives on this Day [c], others would not cure a Disease [d], others would condemn the slightest common Action, under the Notion of its being Work; as when the Disciples rubbed a few Ears of Corn in their Hands to eat [e]: which the Jews at this Day insist was a Transgression of the Law. Nay, they are gone farther than their Predecessors in our Saviour's Time: for now they will not pull one of their Cattle out of a Pit on the Sabbath, which then they would [f]. *Jesus*, the great Restorer of rational Piety, gave them the most convincing Proofs, that they were never bound to abstain from such Things [g]. Indeed, besides his other Arguments, which

[b] Neh. xiii. 15—22. [c] 1 Macc. ii. 31—41.

[d] Matth. xii. 9—14. Mark iii. 1—6. Luke vi. 6—11. xiii. 10—17. xiv. 1—6.

[e] Matth. xii. 1—8. Mark ii. 23—28. Luke vi 1—5.

[f] Matth. xii. 11. Luke xiv. 5. Nizz. vet. in Wagenseil p. 207, 208.

[g] See the Texts, d, e.

you

you may read in the Gospels, a single Rule, alledged by him on more Occasions than one, that *God will have Mercy and not Sacrifice*, afforded the most satisfactory Direction to every considerate Mind. For if he preferred the Exercise of needful Humanity and Goodness, before the most sacred Institutions of his own Worship, (so that the latter might be omitted, if else an Opportunity of the former would be lost:) undoubtedly he would also chuse Mercy, rather than mere Rest from Labour, an Appointment of plainly inferior Rank. As for small and inconsiderable Actions, they come not properly under the Denomination of Work: and unless forbidden by Name, were always to be deemed Objects beneath the Attention of the Law. Nor are we Christians bound to the same Rigour ef external Observances, which the Jews were. For the World being arrived at a proper Maturity for it, our blessed Redeemer hath delivered all the Children of God from that Subjection to these Elements, which their former State of Infancy required: and placed them under the milder Discipline of a more ingenuous and manly Obedience. Not the Letter therefore, but the Spirit and Equity of the Precept obliges Us: only we must re-

member,

member, that to abuſe this gracious Indulgence, would be Ingratitude ſuperadded to Profaneneſs; and that our Concern is, neither ſtupidly to *entangle* ourſelves again *with the Yoke of Bondage*, when *Chriſt hath made us free*[h], nor wickedly *uſe our Liberty for an Occaſion to the Fleſh*[i], or *a Cloak of Malicionſneſs*[k].

To preſerve this Medium hath been the Endeavour of his Church, by prudently accommodating its Practice to the varying Circumſtances of ſucceſſive Ages. Whilſt the Powers of this World were Heathen, and many Believers were Servants for Life to unbelieving Maſters; we do not find, that they refuſed to work, when commanded, on the Lord's Day: well weighing, we may be ſure, how much that would hurt the Cauſe of Chriſtianity; and that abſtaining from Labour on the Day was neither ſo important in itſelf, as meeting for Worſhip; nor founded on ſuch evident Authority of Chriſt and his Apoſtles; who probably were leſs explicit in the Matter, becauſe an Injunction of that Kind would both have expoſed the primitive Converts to much Ill-Treatment, and the Goſpel itſelf to much Calumny and Suſpicion. But as ſoon as ever the Civil Power

[h] Gal. v. 1. [i] Gal. v. 13. [k] 1 Pet. ii. 16.

was in the Hands of Christians, they shewed their Regard to the Day, in this Respect as well as others[l]: and though they did not call it the Sabbath, or Day of Rest, for many hundreds of Years[m], yet they made it such immediately: only with some Exceptions in particular Points, which the Nature of Things, or the Exigency of the Times, appeared to demand. Concerning these, the following Ages differed from each other, both in Practice and Judgement: commonly inclining to Negligence, yet sometimes also to Superstition. But they fell universally into one very great Imprudence, of appointing a large Number of Holydays, besides the Lord's Day: which degraded that, and obstructed needful Industry. But amongst Us, this Evil was redressed at the Reformation, and Matters were once again established on a right Footing: till a Spirit of excessive Strictness arose, and led some to assert the Necessity of as scrupulous, and as gloomy a Rest, on our weekly Festival, as ever the Jews had observed on theirs. Just Apprehensions of Danger from hence unaccountably hurried several both learned and devout Men into

[l] Cod. l. 3. tit. 12. leg. 3.

[m] Heylin, part 2. p. 60. &c. saith, not till 1000.

the

the oppoſite Extreme, without ſeeing it, and without ſuſpecting, (however ſtrange it may appear to us now,) that any Harm was to be feared on that Side[n]. Grievous Animoſities accompanied the Diſpute, which contributed not a little to the general Confuſion, that happened ſoon after. Since the Reſtoration, Opinions have become gradually more reaſonable; but Practice hath grown ſo very looſe, notwithſtanding repeated Laws for the Regulation of it, that few need be told what is permitted on this Day; but Multitudes want much to be reminded of what is required, and forbidden.

Now ſo much Reſt is evidently required, as will ſuffice for the Exerciſes of Religion, public and private, and the Purpoſes of Mercy to ourſelves, our Servants and our Cattle, for which the Day was appointed. And whoever conſiders, how many and important theſe are, and that there muſt be one Rule fixed for all Perſons to go by, cannot fail to ſee, that no other will anſwer the End, than that of excluding worldly Cares and Employments, as much as poſſible,

[n] Heylin ſaith, in the Dedication of his firſt Part to the King, that "in ſuch a Church as this, there was no Fear, that ever the Lord's Day would have been overrun by the profane Neglect of any pious Duty, on that Day required."

from Morning to Night. When we have removed ourſelves, as far as we can, from common Buſineſs, it is mighty apt to intrude upon our Thoughts, and drive out better Things. But how much more would it do ſo, were we always to come immediately from it hither, and return immediately to it again?

Still ſuch Works as are neceſſary for the Support of Life, or reſtoring ſick Perſons to Health, or preſerving others from Attacks of great Diſorders to which they are liable, may and muſt be done upon the Lord's Day: only the Doers of them ſhould be peculiarly careful to ſpend ſome of the Remainder of it in Acts of Piety, which they too often ſadly neglect.

If Labour of any other Sort could be ordinarily permitted on this Day, it muſt be that of cultivating the Earth, and gathering in the Fruits of it: the proper Seaſons for which, eſpecially for the latter, may otherwiſe be loſt. And accordingly Allowances of that Kind have been formerly granted by Law[o]. But they have been found ſo little needful, and ſo liable to Abuſe, that theſe Laws have been repealed, and that of *Moſes* reſumed; *ſix Days ſhalt thou*

[o] Conſtantine firſt made a Law for this Purpoſe. Cod. lib. 3. tit. 12. leg. 3.

work:

work: but on the Seventh, in Earing, that is, in ploughing *Time, and in Harvest, thou shalt rest* [p]. Never, I believe, hath any general Scarcity, seldom, if ever, any great Distress in any particular Place happened, merely by observing this Rule. But were the Breach of it indulged, whenever the Persons concerned should think it necessary; many of them would plead the Necessity every Year, and in a little while throughout the Year: so their Servants and Cattle would be kept to incessant Toil; and just that Part of the World, which most needs instructing and civilizing, that is, the lowest, would have by far the least Opportunity for it.

And if Working is not to be allowed on the Plea of Necessity in their Case, much less can it in others, where the Urgency is not so great. There is no Occupation, in which the Labour of six Days will not maintain a diligent and frugal Man for the seventh, unless he wants Health and Strength, or is burthened with a helpless Family: and these Things entitle him to public Relief. So that every one may have Leisure, on this Day, for serving his Maker, for improving Himself in his Duty, for teaching those, who belong to him, theirs; for en-

[p] Exod. xxxiv. 21.

joying alſo a comfortable Share of Eaſe and Refreſhment. And if any one, from ſordid Attachment to his own Intereſt and Profit, is unwilling to take Leiſure for theſe Purpoſes, he little underſtands, what his real Intereſt conſiſts in; and ſhould not be ſuffered, either to keep ſuch, as are under him, from ſpending this Portion of their Lives better; or to make Advantages to Himſelf by Labour, when others, for ſuch good Reaſons, abſtain from it.

The Laws of our Country therefore are both juſt and wiſe, in prohibiting, not only Work, but (with proper Exceptions) Buying and Selling on the Lord's Day. For they fill up the Time and Thoughts, and detain Men from the Exerciſes of Religion, as effectually as more fatiguing Employments: nor will it be at all difficult, with a little Contrivance, to avoid them. And it is both irreligious to do theſe Things needleſsly, and cruel alſo to force others, either to violate their Conſciences by exerciſing their Callings when they ought not, or to loſe their Buſineſs by refuſing to tranſgreſs their Duty. But if private Perſons will not attend to ſuch Conſiderations, public Magiſtrates, as Guardians of the Laws, ſhould carefully ſupport the Innocent, by puniſhing the Guilty.

Beſides

Besides these Ways of breaking the holy Rest of this Day, another is, needless Travelling upon it. If People take Journies then about their common Business, it is as directly following their Trade, as keeping open Shop. If the Journey be the only Business, it is trespassing on the Quiet, probably too on the Worship of the Day, in the Face of all the World. And this is often done so absolutely without any Colour of sufficient Reason, that it must be mere Affectation: surely not a proper Behaviour towards our Maker, nor a reputable one amongst our Fellow-Creatures. Possibly some of the Great originally took it up, as a Distinction: but whoever will, may very easily distinguish himself in the same Manner. Indeed too many, both of middle and even low Condition, have already learnt to do so: go out early on Parties of Diversion and Amusement, from which they return late; throw away the most sacred Portion of their Time, and not a little of their Money, on Follies, if not Vices, of which they thus acquire a destructive Relish; leave their Families, if they have any, exposed to all Manner of Temptations; and set both Them and their Acquaintance an Example of Disregard to Duty, and of Madness for Plea-

ſure, too likely to ruin them in this Life and the next.

But without worldly Buſineſs, and without ſtirring far from their own Houſes, Men frequently contrive to give themſelves but little Reſt, and their Servants yet leſs: partly by unneceſſary Entertainments and Company at Home, partly by a Multitude of unneceſſary Viſits Abroad; which between them ſo employ ſeveral of the Family, if not the Whole, that ſcarce any Day of the Week is ſo void of Leiſure. Now ſuppoſe theſe Occupations were ever ſo far from being laborious, yet it is by no Means fitting, that Hours allotted to Piety and Recollection ſhould be conſumed and ſwallowed up in a Hurry of Trifles. We ought to allow Seaſons of Quiet to our Minds, as well as our Bodies, that they may cool into ſerious Thoughtfulneſs: and when ſhall that be, if not on this Day? We ought likewiſe to afford every one under us due Opportunities for learning, conſidering, reſolving, praying; and *give them* in this Reſpect, no leſs than others, *what is juſt and equal; knowing that we alſo have a Maſter in Heaven*[q]. If they deſire it, a Refuſal is groſs Inhumanity. If they deſire it not, they

[q] Col. iv. 1.

need it but the more. And inſtead of pleading, that if they had vacant Time, they would uſe it ill; the right Way is, to provide it for them, and endeavour that they may uſe it well. Thus at leaſt we ſhall have done our Duty: which we ſhall uſually find in every Senſe, but conſtantly in the beſt, is conſulting our Intereſt.

After all that hath been ſaid, there may ſometimes remain Doubts concerning the Extent of the Repoſe, enjoined by this Precept. And then our beſt Rule will be, on the one Hand, not to take Liberties beyond the Permiſſion of the Laws, and the Practice of the more pious and conſiderate Part of our Neighbours; and on the other not to ſcruple, what Propriety and Decency and reaſonable Convenience require.

But farther, as hardly any one is capable of ſpending the Whole, and very few near the Whole, of our Day of Reſt in religious Exerciſes, to good Purpoſe; it will be requiſite to inquire, in the laſt Place, how we are to employ the Intervals and the Remainder of it, which we need not or cannot employ thus.

Now there is nothing more fitly joined with Acts of Piety, than Acts of Charity: one excellent Species of which, inſtructing and exhorting thoſe, who belong to us, hath been already

already mentioned: and extending the same good Office, in a prudent Manner, farther, as Occasion serves, is an Employment admirably suited to the Day. Reconciling ourselves upon it to Persons, between whom and us any Displeasure hath been, is peculiarly recommended by the Reason of the Thing, as well as by a Canon of our Church [r]. Visiting the Poor and Sick, not barely in the common Meaning of the Word, *Visit*, but in the scriptural Sense, of taking a kind Notice of their Wants, is not only directed by the same Canon, but countenanced by St. *Paul:* who gave an Order both to the Galatians and the Corinthians, in a particular Exigency, (which is equally a good Rule in others,) that each of them, on *the first Day of the Week*, should appropriate something towards the Necessities of the Saints, *as God had prospered him* [s]. And it is one delightful View of the Day, to look on it as consecrated, amongst other excellent Purposes, to that of forming and executing Designs of Tenderness and Compassion to our distressed Brethren.

But even where there is no Room for doing what is commonly called Charity, mere friendly Intercourse and Conversation, with our Rela-

[r] Can. 13. [s] 1 Cor. xvi. 1, 2.

tions,

-tions, Neighbours and Acquaintance, (if it take not up too much Time,) is a Demonſtration of good Will, which contributes greatly to our mutual Happineſs. And God's providing the frequent Return of a Day, when all the World ſhould be releaſed from Confinement and Toil, and at Liberty to ſhew themſelves in the moſt advantageous and pleaſing Light to each other, (a Liberty which few in Proportion would ever enjoy, were it not for this their Sabbath,) is an Action worthy of our gracious Maker, and of unſpeakable Moment for promoting Courteſy, Affability, and kind Affections. But it is more eſpecially uſeful for ſoftening and poliſhing the rugged Tempers and Manners of the lower Sort of Men: who ought on many Accounts highly to value their Feſtival Days, which one of the principal Heathen Philoſophers, *Plato*, ſaith, the Gods appointed in Pity to Mankind[t]. It was not therefore intended, that we ſhould paſs our Lord's Day in ſullen Retirement, ſhunning human Converſe, or infecting each other with Melancholy. The Jews were bid to *rejoice* in their Feaſts *before the Lord their God*[u]. Chriſ-

[t] Plat. de Leg. l. 2.

[u] Lev. xxiii. 40. Deut. xii. 12, 18. xvi. 11. xxvii. 7.

-tians

tians are bid to *rejoice in the Lord always*[w]. And a very ancient Father, *Tertullian*, informs us, that *on the Sunday*, for ſo he calls it, *they indulged* peculiarly *to Joy*[x]; as well they might, ſince He who died *for our Sins, then roſe for our Juſtification*[y]. Indeed would we but practiſe Chriſtianity as we ought, we ſhould find its Promiſes of Pardon and Strength, its beneficial Precepts, and glorious Proſpects, the Aſſurance of God's Love to us, and the Exertion of our own Love to Him and our Fellow-Creatures, Matter of the higheſt Joy, both within ourſelves, and amongſt each other. And we are much to blame, that we baniſh religious Topics from our Diſcourſe; which might be, if properly introduced, the moſt delightful Part of it. Not that lower Subjects of agreeable and cheerful Converſation need be at all excluded from a Share in the Day: for harmleſs good Humour is an amiable and uſeful Virtue. Only we muſt take ſingular Care now of what we ſhould remember always: that nothing cenſorious or uncharitable, nothing profane or indecent, nothing too light and ludicrous, come out of our Mouths; nothing unworthy of rational and religious Perſons. By ſuch Behavi-

[w] Phil. iv. 4. [x] Apol. c. 16. [y] Rom. iv. 25.

our

our and Communication, we ſhall obſerve the full Import of the Prophet *Iſaiah*'s Direction to the Jews; that they ſhould *honour the Sabbath, not doing their own Ways, nor finding their own Pleaſure, nor ſpeaking their own Words*[z]. This doth not mean, that whatſoever was pleaſing was for that Reaſon to be avoided by them: but that Exerciſes of Piety ought then to be their chief Pleaſure; and nothing unſuitable to them, however pleaſing, done or uttered. They were not to ſay, *Our Lips are our own: who is Lord over us*[a]*?* but at this Time eſpecially to prefer Innocence before Inclination.

And as cheerful Diſcourſe is not forbidden on the Day, ſo neither is a cheerful Uſe of God's Creatures, who *hath given us richly all Things to enjoy*[b]. The religious Governor *Nehemiah*, after the People had been aſſembled to hear the Law, diſmiſſed them with theſe Words: *Go your Way, eat the Fat, and drink the Sweet, and ſend Portions unto them for whom nothing is prepared: for this Day is holy unto our Lord*[c]. And it is ſaid of the firſt Chriſtians, immediately after the mention of their Worſhip, as if it followed immediately after, that *they did eat*

[z] Iſa. lviii. 13. [a] Pſ. xii. 4. [b] 1 Tim. vi. 17.
[c] Neh. viii. 10.

their

their Meat with Gladneſs, and Singleneſs of Heart, praiſing God[d]. But then both over-plentiful Indulgence, and luxurious Delicacy, making the Gratification of our Appetite a ſerious Study, or in the expreſſive Language of Scripture, *a God of our Belly*[e], is very inconſiſtent, not only with the Buſineſs of the Day, but with our whole Profeſſion. And yet more ſo are Intemperance and Debauchery: which profane our Sabbath beyond Compariſon worſe, than labouring upon it would do; pervert it from the Service of God to that of the Devil; and make it a public Miſchief inſtead of a Bleſſing. To prevent this therefore every one ought carefully to watch over Himſelf, Parents over their Children, Heads of Houſes over their Families, and Magiſtrates over the whole Community. For very few Things would either do Inferiors more Good, or intitle Superiors to a larger Share of Divine Favour, than if the latter would enable themſelves to ſay, with the excellent Governor above-mentioned: *I commanded to ſanctify the Sabbath-Day: Remember me, O my God, concerning this, and ſpare me, according to the Greatneſs of thy Mercy*[f].

[d] Acts ii. 46, 47. [e] Phil. iii. 19. [f] Neh. xiii. 22.

But here a Queſtion may be put: Suppoſing Vice be avoided, may not Amuſements and Diverſions be allowed? Now in the firſt Place, Who are they that aſk this? Perſons, that neglect religious Duties? They have no Right to aſk it. Let them do what is commanded on the Day, before they examine what is permitted: elſe their Inquiry comes only to this, Whether they may diſregard it from Beginning to End. For ſuch to plead for Relaxations after the Buſineſs of the Day is over, when, God knows, their whole Buſineſs upon it hath been Idleneſs or worſe, is beyond Meaſure abſurd. And therefore, when ſome Recreations on Sunday in the Afternoon were unadviſedly permitted by Authority, for a while, above an hundred Years ago, they, who had not firſt attended both Morning and Evening Service, were expreſsly forbidden to partake of them. And of thoſe, who do attend the Service of God, very few deſire them. Such of the labouring, and lower Sort of the trading People, as profeſs any Serioufneſs, are well content with indulging themſelves afterwards, at home in amicable Converſation, or abroad in a friendly Viſit, or the Refreſhment of going for a while to contemplate the Beauties of the Creation, which

which this Day was appointed, amongst other Things, to commemorate. And they are very sensible, that taking Liberties, at all considerably greater, would be unfit and unsafe. The Minds of Men, even while they were at Church, would be running on the Diversions, that were to follow: they would be tempted by them to neglect, perhaps intirely, religious Exercises in private: their Amusements would grow to be light and indecent, or tumultuous and mischievous, or both: Expences and Excesses, Drunkenness and Debaucheries, Quarrels and Disorders would attend them: the Day would come by Degrees to be regarded as a Day of Sport only; and if once pious Thoughts were banished at the Time peculiarly appointed for them, when would they find a Place in our Hearts?

Now if these Considerations ought to weigh, and do weigh, with those who are almost constantly kept to Business, and for whom alone, on that Account, the Recreations formerly allowed, were intended and calculated; much more may they, who have Leisure for them nearly as often as they will, and perhaps employ a great deal too much of the Remainder of the Week in them, afford without murmuring

ing to diſtinguiſh one Day in ſeven by abſtaining from them. Still the few of thoſe, who do not abſtain from them, and yet behave like ſerious Perſons in other Inſtances, ought to be reſpected as ſuch; and judged of, in this Particular, with Moderation and Charity. But ſurely at the ſame Time they ſhould be aſked: Where is the Need, where is the Good, of theſe Indulgences of yours on the Lord's Day? If you are very fond of them, you ought, as reaſonable Creatures, and moral Agents, to mortify a Fondneſs, for which you can have no juſt Ground. And if you are indifferent about them, for what Cauſe do you affect to make this Innovation: contrary, we apprehend, to Religion; contrary, you muſt own, to the Laws and Uſages of your Country? Is it to ſhew, that you think farther than the Vulgar? Shew it in ſomewhat better. Indeed, think a little farther ſtill, and you will ſee, that Compliance with wiſe Cuſtoms is a wiſe Thing. And why is not that Cuſtom ſuch, which hath obtained univerſally amongſt us, till of late, in this Matter? Is the Obſervation of this Day grown ſo exceſſively ſtrict within theſe few Years, that there is a Neceſſity of taking new Methods to relax it? Are all your Servants grown ſo im-

moderately ſcrupulous, that you muſt try to weaken the Force of Principle in them, by giving them to underſtand, that you have but little of it yourſelves? For while they conceive you to violate the Sabbath, they will conceive you to diſregard God. Is this then the Light, in which you would have Them, in which you would have other ſerious Perſons conſider you? Whether they will inveigh againſt you, or only grieve for you, why ſhould you give them Cauſe to do either? Why ſhould you countenance and encourage the Profane, tempt the Conſcientious, by your Example, to do what they inwardly condemn, or help to make them look ridiculous, if they ſtand out? But indeed, could you bring all People into your own Opinion, would it be deſirable? Are not Amuſements, and particularly that of Play, grown much too general and frequent and expenſive already? And why would you increaſe it thus? Why would you have the lower Part of the World, whom happily their Buſineſs preſerves from ſuch Things on other Days, come to think them lawful on this; when they have full Leiſure for them, and may argue very plauſibly in Favour of their own Inclinations from the Practice of their Superiors? Muſt not the Introduc-

tion of these Liberties probably keep them, often from Church, almost always from being the better for going thither; give them quite a wrong Turn, waste their small Profits and Earnings, and drive them to many unjust Methods of repairing their Losses, and supplying their Extravagancies; by which, I need not tell you, their Betters must be Sufferers? On these Accounts an Author, not suspected of any Religion, whom I quoted in my first Discourse on this Subject, had however Policy enough to see, and lay it down for a Rule, that Diversions ought to be strictly prohibited on the Lord's Day. Indeed, besides these particular bad Effects, the Use of them on that Day must contribute in general to perpetuate without Intermission an Eagerness for Pleasure and Entertainment, irreconcileable with a Spirit of Piety, and to exclude serious Thought even at the most serious Times.

It hath been said, that such Employment is better, than talking and hearing Scandal. But I am afraid the former by no Means prevents the latter. Or say it did, where is the Necessity of either? If our Amusements alone restrain us from Evil-speaking, we should put ourselves without Delay under the Influence of better

Motives. It hath been pleaded alſo, that Diverſions are uſed in other Countries on Sunday Evenings without Harm. But in ſome they are uſed at that Time, becauſe they conſider the Sunday as over at that Time: for they begin to obſerve it ſtrictly the Evening before, and we do not. But ſtill many of them think even this an inſufficient Defence of the Practice; though Travellers may happen, and no Wonder, to be chiefly acquainted with the freer Sort. That it doth no Harm, is eaſily ſaid, but hard to be proved. And were it to do but little, where Men have been long accuſtomed to it, and are withheld, by a more general Seriouſneſs, and a ſeverer Exerciſe of Authority, from abuſing it; yet it may do infinite Miſchief, where it comes recommended by the Charms of Novelty; and is ſo unlikely, ſo impoſſible, to be confined within moderate Bounds, as in this moſt licentious Nation. We have much more Need therefore to learn from foreign Countries their Practice of going to Church both the Morning and Afternoon of the Day, than of Recreations in the Cloſe of it: for it is extremely perverſe to reject their Authority in the former Caſe, while we rely on it

in the latter. And ſurely, upon the Whole, every good, every prudent Perſon, inſtead of being zealous to propagate Things of this Nature, muſt ſee Cauſe to diſcourage them, at leaſt by abſtaining from them; and to labour in every Way, both for their own Sakes and that of the Public, to preſerve, (what there is much Want of increaſing,) the ſmall Remainder of Chriſtianity, that is left amongſt us. Conſidered in our private Capacities, our Buſineſs here is, not to pleaſe ourſelves without Regard to Conſequences, but ſo to ſpend the few Sabbaths and few Days, which we have to come on Earth, that we may be qualified, at the End of them, to enter into that eternal Sabbath, that *Reſt, which remaineth for the People of God*[g] in Heaven. And conſidered as a Nation, we have great Cauſe to remember, for our Direction, the Promiſe and the Warning, which God gave the Jews for theirs. *If thou turn away thy Foot from the Sabbath, from doing thy Pleaſure on my Holy Day, and call the Sabbath a Delight; the Holy of the Lord, honourable——I will cauſe thee to ride upon the high Places of the Earth, and feed thee with the*

[g] Heb. iv. 9.

Heritage of Jacob thy Father[h]*: But if ye will not hearken unto me, to hallow the Sabbath Day——I will kindle a Fire in the Gates of Jerusalem, and it ſhall devour the Palaces thereof, and ſhall not be quenched*[i].

[h] Iſa. lviii. 13, 14. [i] Jer. xvii. 27.

SERMON XVII.

PHIL. iv. 5.

Let your Moderation be known unto all Men. The Lord is at Hand.

THE Word, *Moderation*, ſignifies in the Original that Reaſonableneſs of Mind, which curbs the Exorbitancies of all our Paſſions, Appetites and Imaginations; confining us to proper Degrees of being affected by the Things about us, and of exerting ourſelves in Relation to them: from which larger Meaning it is naturally and eaſily contracted to expreſs more eſpecially the due Reſtraints of Deſire and Anger, Fear and Sorrow. In diſcourſing upon it therefore, I ſhall ſo treat of the Temper in general, as to have a more immediate Regard to theſe Inſtances of it in particular,

whilst I endeavour to recommend the Virtue of Moderation:

I. From its Conduciveness to the Practice of our Duty.

II. From its good Influence on the Happiness of our Lives here on Earth.

III. From its Importance to that succeeding State, the near Approach of which the Text places in our View.

I. I would shew, how conducive the keeping all our inward Movements within just Limits is to the Practice of our Duty. But here it must be observed, that a merely natural Vehemence of Spirit is not strictly an actual Sin, though it be one of the Consequences of our original Depravity, which we have usually much Cause to lament. For it always puts us on a harder Trial, than Persons of a cooler Temperament have to undergo. Yet still, the greater is our Virtue, if we stand this Trial: and the less our Guilt, if we sometimes fail, from Infirmity or Surprize. But if we act wrong through gross Negligence or deliberate Indulgence; that we were strongly inclined to it, is no good Excuse: for as we could not but know our Inclination,

we

we ought to have watched against it, and checked it. Therefore it is not the Warmth of Temper, with which we are born, and against which we strive, but the wilful or heedless Indulgence of it, that unfits us for the Duties of Life.

We are all of us very sensible, in the main, what those Duties are: we seldom err much in any Particular, when we really desire to know, what is incumbent on us: the Fitness of pious and virtuous Behaviour is evident to our Understandings; and the Esteem of it natural to our Hearts. A Stranger to human Affairs would from this Account immediately conclude, that surely scarce any one ever missed then of doing as he ought. We are unhappily too well acquainted with them to judge thus: and see the Case to be so very much otherwise, that had we no other Guide to direct our Inquiries than our own Reason, it would be impossible for us to say with any Certainty, how we come to be so inconsistent with ourselves. But when once the Scripture hath taught us, that we have lost the primitive Strength and Uprightness, in which God created Man, all the rest is easy.

For we are surrounded here, on every Side, with worldly Objects, capable of giving us Pleasure and Pain; and of stirring up in our corrupted

rupted Natures exceſſive Emotions of Deſire, Hope, Fear, Anger, Sorrow. Theſe Paſſions importunately ſolicit our Attention; and according to the Degree, in which they are gratified, ingroſs it to themſelves: till we find ſo many earthly Things to long after, or to dread; to love, or to hate; to rejoice in, or to lament; and that with ſuch immoderate Earneſtneſs; that Virtue and Religion are ſeldom thought of, and ſeldomer ſtill to any good Purpoſe: their Obligations are, at ſome Times, with miſerable Subtlety eluded; and at others, reſolutely and deſperately broken through, even when we ſee what we are doing, and ſee the Conſequences.

Theſe are the daily Effects of being too ſtrongly moved by the Things of this Life. And they are bitter Streams, that will flow, till the Fountain of our Hearts[a] is healed and *purified, by Faith*[b] in that Grace, which our bleſſed Lord hath procured for us by his Death, and offers to us in his Goſpel. Whatever we allow to make the greateſt Impreſſion upon our Minds, that will have the greateſt Influence on our Conduct; and by Degrees exclude every Thing elſe. It is our Saviour's Determination,

[a] 2 Kings i. 21, 22. James iii. 2. [b] Acts xv. 9.

that

that *no Man can ſerve two Maſters*[c]: that is, when their Commands interfere. We may indeed change from one to another, and ſo be faithful to neither, and diſpleaſe both. But whatever we permit for the preſent to engage our Attention, that for the preſent we ſhall purſue, and paſs by or trample upon every Thing elſe, which may ſtand in our Way to it. Thus, if we indulge conſiderably the Love of Pleaſure, of Gain, of Advancement; we may deſign indeed, or think we deſign, along with it, to keep within the Bounds of Temperance, of Juſtice, of Humility, and preſerve a due Regard to the Intereſts of a future State. But theſe Purpoſes will be ineffectual: the Objects, to which our fallen Nature is prone, will by the Help of but a little Partiality in their Favour, fill our Souls and bias our Actions. Again: if we ſuffer ourſelves to be diſcompoſed by the Happineſs of others, we ſhall grow envious; if by Injuries from others, we ſhall grow revengeful. If we let the more harmleſs Paſſions of Fear and Sorrow become predominant, we ſhall unfit ourſelves for Uſefulneſs in our Stations, and weaken our Senſe of Gratitude for the Bleſſings of Life. If we only give a Looſe to un-

[c] Matth. vi. 24. Luke xvi. 13.

meaning Fancy and Caprice, we ſhall degrade the Dignity of our Species, and be hurried not only into Folly, but Sin. In what Way ſoever Inclination bears us along, beyond the ſober Dictates of Reaſon, we ſhall be continually and almoſt irreſiſtably tempted to overlook and tranſgreſs thoſe Rules of Duty, which a better Command of ourſelves would have enabled us to perceive and diſpoſed us to obſerve.

Our Maker expects from us, that we ſhould firſt meaſure the Value of Things rightly, then eſteem them ſuitably to it. And almoſt the only Error, by which we fail of this, is being affected too much by the Concerns of the preſent World, and from thence too little by thoſe of the next. There is, it muſt be owned, a great Variety of Wickedneſs amongſt Men: and Sins directly oppoſite to each other. But in one Point they agree notwithſtanding: that the Commiſſion of them all is greatly owing to the ſame inconſiderate Eagerneſs, by which we paint to ourſelves Things here below in much too ſtrong Colours, and receive ſuch deep Impreſſions from them, as efface, for the Time at leaſt, all the Dictates of Prudence and of Conſcience. Indeed over-much Vehemence, even in Matters, that appear to have no Ten-

dency

dency towards Guilt, is both wrong in itſelf, and habituates Men to the ſame Vehemence on worſe Occaſions. Nay, Zeal for Things that ſeem, or even are, good and laudable, if it exceed Bounds, frequently miſguides great Numbers, either to miſtake very ſtrangely what they mean to aim at, or to uſe Methods for attaining it, which are quite unjuſtifiable. This hath been ſo dreadfully the Caſe in political and religious Diſputes, that every one diſpoſed to uncommon Heat about either, hath peculiar Need to examine his Heart, whether what he imagines to be neceſſary Earneſtneſs in the Cauſe of God or his Country, be not wholly or in Part ſinful Impetuoſity; and to watch carefully againſt that Extreme; which may be as bad or worſe than the lukewarm Indifference of others.

Moderation then, about every Thing relative to this World, is highly requiſite for the Practice of our Duty. I proceed now to ſhew you,

II. That it is not leſs ſo for the preſent Happineſs of our Lives.

Every one of our Paſſions, Appetites and Inclinations, when raiſed too high, is capable of giving us very uneaſy Agitations of Mind: and

and ſome, if indulged at all beyond Reaſon, are grievouſly painful to ourſelves, and many Ways prejudicial to thoſe amongſt whom we live. They of Courſe will be inticed or provoked to the ſame Unreaſonableneſs, of which they have ſeen us guilty: and thus it is, that Sins and Sufferings propagate one another, and increaſe without End. But here I would conſider more diſtinctly the bad Conſequences of immoderate Deſire and Anger, Fear and Grief.

They, that will not reſtrain their Deſires, muſt often earneſtly wiſh for Satisfactions, which they cannot in the leaſt hope to obtain: and this directly brings on Repining, Deſpondence, Miſery. And uſually ſuch, as do hope, will alſo fear; and continue, perhaps a long Time, in a very diſagreeable Suſpenſe between both. Or let Hope, if it can, be ſo ſtrong as to exclude Fear; and full Expectation give the utmoſt Pleaſure: not to ſay, that ſuch Pleaſure, whilſt it laſts, is tumultuous, waſtes the Spirits, and wears the Frame; only think, how often, in a World ſo uncertain, it will vaniſh all at once; and what Effects a ſudden Fall from this Paradiſe muſt have on a Mind impatient and undiſciplined! But ſuppoſing no ſuch Diſappointment to happen: Perſons of an eager and

reſtleſs Temper, after gaining one Point, are apt to be immediately juſt as ſolicitous about another: ſo they are always in Purſuit, and never contented. *What hath Man of all his Labour; and of the Vexation of his Heart, wherein he hath laboured under the Sun? All his Days are Sorrows, and his Travel, Grief: yea, his Heart taketh not Reſt in the Night. This alſo is Vanity*[d]. Very gentle and governable Deſires would ſufficiently excite us to conſider what is really worth acquiring, and to beſtow upon it the Labour, which it deſerves. Beſides, not uncommonly People miſs the Object of their Wiſhes, merely by over-great Anxiety about obtaining it. And being anxious for any Thing beyond its Capacity of giving us true Happineſs, can do us no Service; but much Harm it eaſily may. Now that the ſeveral Things, which Mankind run after ſo paſſionately do not make them happy, is a notorious Fact. Every Day we ſee thoſe, who have been the moſt ſucceſsful in the Race, as miſerable as any: or we might ſee it, if we would, with the leaſt Reflexion. And to what is it then, that they are ſacrificing the real preſent Enjoyment of their Beings?

[d] Eccl ii. 22, 23.

Another

Another Paſſion, in which we are extremely prone to be exceſſive, and wretched by the Exceſs, is Anger. We let very ſmall Matters move us very greatly; ſometimes imaginary Faults of others: and ſo we diſquiet and torment ourſelves, as well as them, without any Manner of Cauſe. A little Study of Moderation would prevent all this, and more Evil: would ſuppreſs that abſurd Unreaſonableneſs, which puts us often out of Humour, and now and then violently, without knowing, why we are ſo: would teach us to diſtinguiſh, (which we commonly forget to do,) thoſe who have not offended us from thoſe who have; and would never allow us to puniſh the Innocent with the Guilty. For want of this, Reſentment boils within us, and perhaps flames out, to our extreme Hurt in ſeveral Reſpects, againſt ſuch, as very innocently, from Accident or Ignorance, or a juſt Regard to themſelves or their Friends; or it may be a kind one to us, ſtand in the Way of any Thing, that we want to do or have. But even ſuppoſing that Men really treat us ill, yet it muſt be our Wiſdom and our Intereſt to conſider coolly, what Alleviations may be pleaded: what Miſtake or Inadvertence of theirs, what Indiſcretion of ours, or Sug-

gestion of others, may have occasioned the Misdemeanor. And a calm Temper will presume, that there may be Alleviations, where none appear. Or if there were none, it would still reflect, that in this World, Things will go wrong, and human Creatures act amiss: that we must prepare ourselves for such Events, and not be shocked at them: that the Offender is our Brother, whom we ought to love; and that, with all his Faults, we are but too like him; subject, if not to the same, yet to others; and possibly, all Circumstances weighed, nearly as bad, or worse. Now such Reflexions, made habitual, would contribute unspeakably to the Tranquillity and Comfort of our Lives. Anger always gives Pain to him who feels it: and we should avoid feeling that Pain as much as we can. It rises also, with amazing Suddenness, almost in Spite of us, if once we give it vent, to the most unexpected and pernicious Extremities. Even the lower Degrees of it displease, and are intended to displease, the Persons against whom it is expressed: this excites them to make such Returns, as cannot fail to be uneasy to us, but often do us great and lasting and irreparable Mischief: and from hence a very large Part of the Misery, that Men undergo, proceeds. We

have but ſeldom really conſiderable Provocations: and therefore it is abſurd to be affected, as if we had them frequently: and how conſiderable ſoever they may be, it is highly imprudent to let ourſelves be hurried away, we know not whither, by a blind and injurious Rage, the Parent of innumerable Inconveniences and fruitleſs Repentance; inſtead of *poſſeſſing our Souls in Patience*[e]; and endeavouring to remove, by *Meekneſs of Wiſdom*[f], whatever would make our Paſſage through Life uncomfortable. But we ought to be ſingularly mild towards thoſe, who in Reality give us no Provocation: as they certainly do not, who only preſume to differ from us in Opinion, be it in Religion or Politics, or any other Point. Yet ſuch Differences have produced more of that *Wrath of Man*, which *worketh not the Righteouſneſs of God*[g], more bitter Contentions, and more ſhocking Barbarities, even amongſt the profeſſed Diſciples of the *meek and lowly*[h] Jeſus, than almoſt any other Cauſe hath done any where on Earth.

Two other Paſſions, nearly allied, which often run to a miſerable Exceſs, are Fear and

[e] Luke xxi. 19. [f] James iii. 13. [g] James i. 20.
[h] Matth. xi. 29.

Grief:

Grief: as indeed, when Desire of and Delight in any Thing of this World is too vehement, the Apprehension of losing it, and Concern for having lost it, will be vehement in Proportion. And therefore we must endeavour to moderate the two former of these Emotions, if we would moderate the latter effectually. But indeed we can often be much afflicted on parting with that in which we had little Pleasure: and extremely disturbed with Fear of what is by no Means likely to happen; or if it should happen, would do us but little Harm; and will certainly do us not the less but the more, for being immoderately disquieted about it beforehand, or grieved at it afterwards. But I shall dwell no longer on these two Passions, because the Weakness and Wretchedness of indulging them is universally acknowledged; though that Acknowledgement is far from putting Men sufficiently on their Guard against them. Only it should be added here, that avoiding Excess of Anxiety under the Troubles of Life, as it is a very common Meaning of the Word, translated *Moderation*, was that in all Likelihood, which St. *Paul* had chiefly in his Mind. For it immediately follows: *Be careful for nothing; but in every Thing, with Thanksgiving, let your Requests*

be made known unto God: and the Peace of God ſhall keep your Hearts and Minds through Jeſus Chriſt[1].

Here therefore I ſhall conclude this Head. For there would be no End of reckoning up minutely the Inſtances of being too ſtrongly agitated by worldly Things, and the Miſchiefs that follow it: precipitate Judgements, raſh Reſolutions and haſty Choices, made and perſevered in; partial Fondneſſes, unreaſonable Averſions, endleſs Animoſities, obſtinate Purſuits of our own Ruin: then utter Diſcontent with ourſelves, the whole World, and the Maker of it: every Folly, every Sin and Suffering, of which an ungoverned Mind is capable.

Thus then the preſent Wiſdom appears of diligently cultivating, and I muſt add, (for without it, all your Diligence will be in vain) earneſtly praying for, that Calmneſs and *Moderation* of Spirit, which the Apoſtle requires that we ſhould not only have, but ſhould alſo *let it be known unto all Men:* an Expreſſion comprehending ſeveral Particulars of great Moment: that we ſhould not be ſatisfied with our own Opinion, that we rule our Paſſions well,

[1] Phil. iv. 6, 7.

(a

(a Matter about which we are daily deceived) but proceed in the Diſcipline of them, till every one elſe allows us to be Maſters; that the good Effects of our Compoſure ſhould be perceived and felt, not only at ſome Times, and by ſome Perſons, but always by all who are concerned with us; and laſtly, that we ſhould be careful to ſhew the World around us, by our Example, ſet before them with Decency and Modeſty, how poſſible, how becoming, how beneficial, the practice of this Virtue is.

And the Motive, ſubjoined to this Precept, is a powerful one indeed: which therefore I propoſed to lay before you

III. Its Importance to our obtaining a favourable Sentence in the approaching Day of Judgement, and eternal Bleſſedneſs in our future Life. *Let your Moderation be known unto all Men. The Lord is at Hand.*

However plainly it appears, that ſtrict Self-Government is the true Secret for Self-Enjoyment here, yet the whole World hath agreed and reſolved upon it, that the contrary ſhall be true: that the Life for a Man to lead, who will make the moſt of his Time on Earth, is in a Courſe of eager Deſires, vehement Purſuits,

and high Expectations, unbounded Indulgence in what he likes, and keen Resentments against all that would disappoint him. Each confirms the other in this Way of thinking and acting. That we see one another miserable by it, nay feel ourselves to be so, this avails not: we go on still, and scarce any one hath the Courage to trust himself, and call the Judgement of Mankind in Question. If it must be so then, let that Point be insisted on no longer. But be the Happiness of this Life what it will; yet if this Life be not all, if it be but a small Part of what we are concerned in, it will deserve but a small Part of our Attention. And looking on human Affairs in this Light, will soon place before us a very different Scene, from that which usually attracts our Eye. Here we are pursuing Pleasures, Riches, Rank, Power, some Imagination or another, belonging solely to this present State of Things, as our great Good: our whole Hearts are engaged and overwhelmed in Fears and Hopes and Joys and Sorrows, arising from these Objects, and nothing else for any Continuance affects them. Yet all the while, this present State, and every Thing in it, is confessedly a Trifle, compared to that eternal one, which is to follow. What

are

are we about then, and how unaccountably do we deceive ourſelves! We are not really miſerable, if Things go contrary to our Wiſhes here: we are not truly happy, if they go according to them. This World looks conſiderable, becauſe its Objects are near and glaring: but it deludes us. The Whole that we have to do with it, is the leaſt and meaneſt Part of the Buſineſs of our Exiſtence: and the Time will come, when we ſhall ſee its Enjoyments and its Sufferings, all it can promiſe or threaten, to be nothing; and that the Difference between having gone through it in proſperous or adverſe Circumſtances, is not worth mentioning. Now what we ſhall ſee to be true hereafter, is true at preſent: and we ſhould endeavour to be affected by it accordingly. If we were, we ſhould be little affected by any Thing beſides: but ſhould paſs our Days in a happy Calm; and pity thoſe, who voluntarily fill theirs with Diſturbance and Hurry; *walk in a vain Shadow, and diſquiet themſelves in vain* [k].

But the Thought of a future State hath a yet further and ſtronger Influence in this Caſe. The Felicity of it is provided for thoſe only,

[k] Pſ. xxxix. 6, 7.

who have made themſelves fit for it, through the Help of God's Grace, by an innocent Behaviour, and religious Frame of Soul; neither of which is conſiſtent with being attached, and given up, to the Things here below. A Heart and Affections tied down to them, will grow like them: become earthy and baſe, inſenſible of pious and virtuous Movements, unmeet for *the Inheritance of the Saints in Light*[l]. *If any Man love the World* inordinately, *the Love of the Father is not in him*[m]. They are different Spirits, thwarting each other continually: and we have only to chuſe, of which we will be; for of both we cannot.

And it is a moſt weighty Conſideration towards determining our Choice, that the Time which we have, either for buſying and gratifying ourſelves here, or preparing for hereafter, is of ſmall Duration. For *the Lord is at Hand*. All that we can hope or dread, enjoy or ſuffer, in the preſent State, will ſoon be over, poſſibly very ſoon: and all that we can do to qualify us for the next, how much ſoever we want, muſt be done in a very ſhort ſpace of time. The holy and ſelf-denying Jeſus, who expects and will aſſiſt us to imitate him, but

[l] Col i. 12. [m] 1 John ii. 15.

will

will cast us off intirely if we neglect it, he hath said, *Behold, I come quickly, and my Reward is with me, to give every Man according as his Work shall be*[n]. The Truth of these Things we all know; the Consequences of them we all must see; and no Words can make them plainer.

Not that either the Affections or the Appetites of our Nature are to be extirpated, but only confined within due Bounds. The Necessaries of each one's Condition in Life are still to be provided, because they are Necessaries. The Duties, which we owe to each other here, are diligently to be done, because they are Duties. The Comforts of Life too, as they ought to be thankfully received, may doubtless be cheerfully used. Nay even as to the lighter Amusements, if we make them not a Business, but a Relaxation only, at fit times, and in a fit Degree; since our Infirmity may demand a little of them, that little cannot but be lawful. It is in Truth, if we would consider justly, a very humbling Reflexion to think we need them: but since we do, so much as we need must be innocent. And to perplex ourselves with Scruples about small Matters of

[n] Rev. xxii. 12.

this

this Kind, would be at once diſtruſting the Goodneſs of God, inſtead of enjoying it properly; and making our Lives uneaſy to ourſelves, and Religion unamiable to others. But though Errors on this Side ought to be mentioned, and are very pitiable when they happen; yet they are far from being common. It is the oppoſite Extreme that Mankind in general wants to be guarded againſt. Let us then remember that whatever Lengths we go in the Indulgence of any Inclination beyond what is on one Account or another plainly requiſite, we ſhould be ſure to proceed with ſerious Caution: for human Virtue is very weak, and the Solicitations of Things preſent very powerful. In Reaſon indeed they are of ſmall Moment: but in Fact we find it infinitely difficult to ſit looſe to them, and reſerve our Souls for worthier Objects. *Take Heed* therefore to *yourſelves*, that you *ſay* not *in your Hearts, my Lord delayeth his Coming*, and either *begin to ſmite your Fellow-Servants*, or *to eat and drink with the Drunken: take Heed, leaſt your Hearts be overcharged with the Cares* or the Pleaſures, the Reſentments or the Sorrows *of this Life; and that Day come upon you unawares* [o]. For

[o] Matth. xxiv. 48, 49. Luke xxi. 34

this I say, Brethren, the Time is short. It remaineth, that they that weep, be as though they wept not; and they that rejoice, as though they rejoiced not; they that buy, as though they possessed not; and they that use this World, as though they used it not. For the Fashion of this World passeth away [p].

[p] 1 Cor. vii. 29, 30, 31.

SER-

SERMON XVIII.

PROV. x. 7.

The Memory of the Juſt is bleſſed: but the Name of the Wicked ſhall rot.

FROM theſe Words I ſhall endeavour to ſhew,

I. How great a Concern Men naturally have to leave an honourable Memory behind them.

II. What Care God hath taken, that both the Good and the Bad ſhall be eſteemed after Death, as they deſerve.

III. What Care We ought to take of the ſame Thing.

I. That Men have naturally an earneſt Solicitude, to leave an honourable Memory behind them.

This indeed is not expreſſed, but evidently implied in the Text: which being doubtleſs intended as a Motive to good Actions, and a Diſcouragement from bad, can yet be neither, unleſs Mankind are influenced by Regard to future Fame: which indeed they are to a very high Degree. All Men in all Ages, with extremely few Exceptions, if any, have both deſired and endeavoured, that others ſhould entertain a good Opinion of them; and, if poſſible, a great one. To this Purſuit, Multitudes have ſacrificed their Eaſe, their Intereſt, the deareſt of their other Paſſions, and their Lives themſelves. They who have failed in it, have given the ſtrongeſt, and ſometimes moſt ſhocking and fatal, Proofs of their Uneaſineſs: they who have ſucceeded, have always expreſſed the higheſt Joy in the Acquiſition; and been celebrated and envied, as happy Perſons. Even the loweſt Part of the World have thought the Eſteem of their Acquaintance, were the Circle of them ever ſo narrow or mean, well worth having: And the moſt deſtitute of any conſiderable Advantage or Accompliſhment to be valued for, have ſtill ſet up ſome Claim to Reputation, were it a trifling, were it a groundleſs, were it an abſurd one, rather than have none.

They

They, who know they have forfeited their Title to a good Character, labour hard however, by concealing and palliating Matters, to retain as much as they can of it. And even the abandoned to Wickedneſs, who know their Fellow-Creatures in general muſt abhor them, ſtill aim at a little Comfort from the wretched Applauſes of their Accomplices. They who take Pains to get over the Love of Reputation, manifeſt, in Spite of themſelves, the utmoſt Fondneſs for it, whenever they can have it; and often grievous Longings after it, in thoſe very Caſes, where they have deſtroyed it irrecoverably with their own Hands. Even they who affect to ridicule it as a Folly and a Cheat, have uſually nothing elſe in View than to obtain it, for a pretended Sagacity in detecting the Cheat. Nay, ſuch as think their Duty binds them to extirpate it from their Breaſts, as a Frailty and a Sin, certainly think they deſerve, and almoſt conſtantly ſhew they expect, much the more of it on that Account. A truly good Perſon, indeed, will always, in the firſt Place, *ſeek the Honour, which cometh from God only*[a]. For if *we love the Praiſe of Men, more than his*[b]; our Saviour hath warned us, by the Example of the

[a] John v. 44. [b] John xii. 43.

Jews,

Jews, who were highly guilty of this Weakneſs, that we ſhall neither judge nor act as we ought. And it would be a juſtly ruinous Miſtake, either to do bad Things for the favourable Opinion of thoſe around us, or good Things *to be ſeen of them* only, and *have* that for *our Reward*[c], inſtead of *ſetting God always before us*[d], and *ſeeking for Glory, Honour and Immortality*[e], by approving our Hearts and Lives to Him. But ſtill, Deſire of being eſteemed by our Fellow-Creatures, conſiſtently with, and in Subordination to, our Maker's Approbation, is a natural, and therefore an innocent Paſſion; prompts us to what is right, and ſupports us in it; and ſurely we have Need of every Support. Nor doth Reaſon only, but Revelation recommend it to us, even in the more perfect Diſpenſation of the New Teſtament itſelf: exhorting us to the Practice of Righteouſneſs and Peace from this Motive: *For he that in theſe Things ſerveth Chriſt, is acceptable to God and approved of Men*[f].

But we not only all deſire an honourable Repute, each according to his Notion of it, in our Life-time; whilſt it may be ſerviceable to us,

[c] Matth. vi. 1, 5. [d] Pſ. xvi. 8. [e] Rom. ii. 7.
[f] Rom. xiv. 18.

to

to be thought well of; and muſt at leaſt be pleaſing, to be told that we are: but we have earneſt Deſires alſo of being remembred, as much to our Advantage as poſſible, after we are gone. Accordingly, influenced by this Hope, we both do and ſuffer a great deal, to accompliſh Things, the Credit of which we ſhall live but a very little while to enjoy; nay which perhaps will never be known, till we are dead: we vindicate ourſelves to Poſterity, with almoſt as great Solicitude, as to thoſe of our own Times; and feel it a powerful Support under the heavieſt Cenſures that lie upon us now, if we can hope, that ſuch as come after us, will judge more impartially, and hold us in Eſteem.

Yet, all the while, we have little or no Imagination, that we ſhall be then within Reach of hearing what is ſaid of us; or, in any Manner whatever, benefited by Praiſe, or hurt by Reproach. For which Reaſon, ſome Men, who are very ſenſible of what Uſe a preſent good Character is, have treated all Concern for poſthumous Fame as a mere Abſurdity; and valued themſelves upon detecting it. Now really if it were one; it would be ſo palpable a one, that finding it out would be no mighty

Discovery. But indeed it is a gracious and wise Provision of our Maker, for the Happiness of his Creatures: and the contrary Persuasion arises, not from Depth of Inquiry, but Superficialness.

In many, if not most Things, Providence hath appointed our Pleasure here below to proceed much more from Pursuit and Expectation beforehand, than from Enjoyment afterwards: by which Method we have plainly some Happiness both sooner and surer, than if it began only with the Attainment of our Wishes. It is true, we must also have some Disappointment from hence: but This, (besides that Reason and Experience will keep it from being excessive,) may by Religion be rendered extremely useful: as it shews, that complete and lasting Satisfaction is not to be had on Earth. Nay, if obtaining our Desires were to give us no Pleasure, indeed if we were never to obtain them, yet the Pleasure we have in the Prospect of obtaining them would certainly be valuable, in Proportion to the Degree of it: only abating for the Uneasiness at last, of finding ourselves mistaken. But now in the Case before us, though it were allowed that Persons do not enjoy, after their Deaths, the Reputation in which they

they are then held; yet they enjoy it long before, and that without any Abatement to follow at all: for furely they are not uneafy in the other World, for want of knowing how they are honoured in this.

Befides, as virtuous and beneficial Actions are by far the moft certain Way of procuring any durable Efteem from Mankind, fo planting in us a Defire of fuch Efteem as may endure when we are gone, is providing no fmall Security for our good Behaviour here: and confequently, for our own Happinefs, and that of all with whom we are concerned: but particularly of our Children, Relations and Friends; who will doubtlefs be more regarded on Account of the fair Character that we have left behind us; and incited to imitate that Conduct for which they fee our Memory honoured.

So that this Principle, far from being an Impofition on Mankind, and a Prejudice to be rooted out, is an important Bleffing, conferred on us by Heaven, and diligently to be cherifhed; even were it abfolutely certain, that the Dead neither have, nor ever fhall have, any Knowledge of the Refpect that is continued to them after their Deceafe. But indeed it is by no Means certain, that good Perfons departed

may not in their present intermediate State, or however in that after the last Judgement, receive considerable Delight from knowing some Way or other, that the Characters, which they have deserved, have not been denied them, but honourably paid by their Survivors. For as the Desire of being esteemed is a natural Principle, and one which worthy Men beyond others cultivate and improve, why should we doubt of its subsisting hereafter, and being gratified? It is true, the Blessed in Heaven will be much above feeling Pain from any injurious Treatment of their Names on Earth. But why may they not enjoy Pleasure from a just Regard shewn them? Especially as this Pleasure comprehends in it rejoicing that others do their Duty, and that too such a Part of their Duty, as must singularly encourage the general Practice of Virtue. Besides, the good Influence of their Memory is one Way, amongst others, by which they have faithfully endeavoured to be useful amongst Men, and why should not the Knowledge, that they have in some Degree at least succeeded, be one Ingredient in their Reward?

No wonder then, if we rejoice now in the Prospect of what we may hope will give us

Joy to all Eternity: no Wonder if the wise Son of *Sirach* directs us: *Have regard to thy Name; for that shall continue with thee above a thousand great Treasures of Gold. A good Life hath but a few Days: but a good Name endureth for ever* [g].

Still it is extremely evident, (and yet very needful to remind Men, who are strangely forgetful of it) that all this must be cautiously understood of such Reputation only, as is truly good; sought from proper Motives, and pursued by proper Means. For if People affect to be admired for Excellencies, which they have not, their Attempt of cheating Mankind will probably be as vain, as it is certainly unjust: if they court Fame by Qualifications of little or no Value; all that they can gain by it, will be of little or no Use to the World or themselves: and if they aim at it by Methods, that do Harm amongst Men; the higher their Ambition rises, and the more fully it succeeds, the greater Misery they will bring down not only on others, but on their own Heads too. Yet how dreadfully large are the Numbers of those, who have aspired to Reputation by the most insignificant Accomplishments; either not from

[g] Ecclus. xli, 12, 13. ——

knowing them to be ſuch, or from Deſpair of acquiring better: of thoſe, who unwilling to labour honeſtly for a Character, have thought to purchaſe it cheaper by Falſehood and Fraud: nay of thoſe alſo, who not diſtinguiſhing between a great Fame and a good one, or however preferring the former before the latter, have choſen rather to be talked of and wondered at for the ſurprizing Things which they have done, (however miſchievous) than eſteemed and loved for ſuch beneficent Actions, as they had in their Power. And every one of theſe not only goes wrong himſelf, but contributes to lead others into the ſame Miſtake; or to prevent their diſcerning it, when once made.

The Happineſs of Men therefore is greatly concerned in avoiding ſuch Errors; and, as we are ſo very apt to fall into them, the Goodneſs of God is very conſpicuous in pointing them out ſo clearly in Scripture: not only ſtigmatizing thoſe, *whoſe Glory is in their Shame* [h], but warning us againſt ſo exceſſive an Admiration even of Things in themſelves valuable, as interferes with the ſuperior Regard we owe to real Piety and Virtue. *Let not the wiſe Man glory in his Wiſdom, neither let the mighty Man*

[h] Phil. iii. 19.

glory

glory in his Might, let not the rich Man glory in his Riches. But let him that glorieth, glory in this, that he underſtandeth and knoweth me, that I am the Lord, which exerciſe Loving-kindneſs, Judgement and Righteouſneſs in the Earth: for in theſe Things I delight, ſaith the Lord[1]. And though the Word of God moſt frequently and chiefly inſiſts on other and nobler Motives to a due Regulation of our Love of Fame, yet is it far from either forgetting or ſlighting this inferior one; that by a worthy Conduct we ſhall obtain our Deſire, and by a criminal one fail of it intirely. For *the Memory of the Juſt is bleſſed: but the Name of the Wicked ſhall rot.* Let us therefore proceed to examine,

II. What Care the Goodneſs and Juſtice of God have taken that both theſe Things ſhall be ſo.

Now two Methods, which he hath employed, have been mentioned already. He hath formed the Hearts of Men to eſteem Virtue, and abhor Wickedneſs, wherever they ſee or remember it. And he hath made the Happineſs of Men, private and public, greatly depend on the encouraging right Actions by as durable Honours as they can, and diſcounte-

[1] Jer. ix. 23, 24.

nancing wrong ones by as lasting Infamy. So that if People will act suitably either to their best inward Principles, or their evident Interest, God hath made it secure, that the Assertion laid down in the Text shall be verified. And that, besides this general Provision founded in our Nature, there is also a particular Providence, causing the Memory of the Just and Good to flourish out of their Ashes, and blasting that of the Wicked; not only may be concluded, with very probable Reason, from the divine Attributes, but collected from express Declarations of Scripture on this Head. *The Righteous shall be had in everlasting Remembrance: his Horn shall be exalted with Honour. The Ungodly shall see it and it shall grieve him; he shall gnash with his Teeth and consume away: the Desire of the Ungodly shall perish*[k], *and the Candle of the Wicked shall be put out*[l].

Undoubtedly it would be a more pleasing Consideration to worthy Men, and seemingly a more efficacious one, if they could always hope that present Respect would be paid to their Characters whilst living, as well as future to their Memories when dead. And for the most Part it is paid in a good Measure: at least by

k Ps. cxii. 6, 9, 10. l Prov. xxiv. 20.

such

ſuch Perſons, as they chiefly deſire ſhould approve their Conduct; and in ſuch Proportions, as are very ſufficient to give them ſenſible Comfort and Spirit to go on. But ſtill the Deficiencies in this reſpect are great, and the Cauſes of thoſe Deficiencies many. Sometimes the Imperfection of their Goodneſs, ſometimes the Strictneſs of thoſe Rules, which they find neceſſary to preſerve it; and ſometimes alſo, for it muſt be owned, unneceſſary Peculiarities and Imprudences which obſcure it; (as little Faults will frequently hide great Excellencies;) theſe Things, I ſay, often hinder very valuable Men, though it is pity they ſhould, from being eſteemed in any tolerable Degree like what they ought to be. And there are other yet greater Hindrances, ariſing from other Quarters: from the Madneſs and Wickedneſs of Party Zeal; from the Hatred of the Vicious and Irreligious to thoſe who often muſt oppoſe them, and always by their Example at leaſt put them to Shame: from the Envy of moderately good People, to ſuch as one way or other come in Competition with them; and from the Inattention of moſt People to preſent Merit, ſeen familiarly by them every Day.

But

But ſtill neither ought theſe Things to be any Diſcouragement to Us, nor are they any Objection to the Wiſdom of Providence. For, on the Whole, it would probably not be to the Advantage of good Perſons, but far from it, to have all the Debt, which Mankind owes them, paid immediately. It might endanger their Humility: lead them to an uncharitable Contempt of others, and a hazardous Confidence in themſelves. Both their Virtue and their Peace would be the leſs ſecure, the higher their Reputation was raiſed: and the more they were influenced to what is good by the preſent Applauſe of Men; the leſs Proof they would give, to their own Hearts, as well as to the World, of ſeeking the future Approbation of God; and of acting from that Faith in Things unſeen, which ought to be the main Principle of their Conduct, and ſhall be the main Foundation of their Reward. Therefore, inſtead of being ſo angry as we commonly are, when any one fails of doing our Character Juſtice; were they to do it ever ſo much Injuſtice, we ſhould throw Reſentment out of our Thoughts, and look upon every Outrage of this Sort as a Means of improving ourſelves; and indeed as one good Mark, that we are in

ſome

ſome Degree ſuch as we ought. For it is our Saviour's Rule: *If ye were of the World, the World would love his own: but becauſe ye are not of the World, but I have choſen you out of the World, therefore the World hateth you* [m]. *Bleſſed are ye when Men ſhall revile you and perſecute you, and ſay all Manner of Evil againſt you falſely, for my Sake. Rejoice and be exceeding glad: for great is your Reward in Heaven: for ſo perſecuted they the Prophets, which were before you* [n]. *Woe unto you, when all Men ſhall ſpeak well of you: for ſo did their Fathers to the falſe Prophets* [o].

But when once good Men are removed to another State, all the Reaſons, which made it unſafe for Them to receive Praiſe in this, are over; and moſt of the Reaſons, that made others unwilling to beſtow it, are over too. Oppoſitions of Intereſts are then uſually at an End; Party Animoſities cool, unjuſt Imputations diſperſe and clear up; ſome begin to recollect, that they have been too vehement againſt thoſe that are gone; others, that they have been too negligent of them; their Loſs is felt; their good Qualities now ſtand in no Man's Way, their good Deeds may be told without Suſpicion

[m] John xv. 19. [n] Matth. v. 11, 12. [o] Luke vi. 26.

of Flattery; over their Imperfections and Singularities a Veil is thrown, partly by time, partly by common Humanity, which is acknowledged peculiarly due to the Ashes of the Dead; we are surprized, that we could fail of discerning their Worth sooner; and we pay them a double Honour in their Graves, by Way of Amends for what we defrauded them of before: not to say, that now and then we raise them a little higher, in hopes of depressing some that survive.

By these Means it comes to pass, that though sometimes *there is no Remembrance of the wise Man more than of the Fool*: (which appeared to *Solomon*, whenever it happened, so great an Evil, that *he hated Life* on account of it [p]:) yet generally speaking they who deserve well have at length due Acknowledgements paid to their Memory. More extensive Merit will, as it ought, have more extensive Commendation. But such, as move in a narrower Sphere, obtain, perhaps full as constantly, all they wished for, and aimed at, in this Respect: an honest Repute, and friendly Regret amongst their Acquaintance. And those who are the least known; who may seem, as the Son of

[p] Eccl. ii. 16, 17. See also ix. 15.

Sirach expresses it, to *have no Memorial*; but to *perish, as though they had never been*: if yet, as it follows in him, *they were merciful Men*, it will be found, that *their Righteousness hath not been forgotten*[q]. They will almost always have some Witnesses, to preserve the Knowledge of their good Desert, often such as are little thought of: and though very small Notice may seem to be taken of them at present, yet sooner or later they will be remembred; and missed, perhaps a great deal more than, if they knew it, they would wish. Nay, even such as *the World* hates and persecutes, because it *is not worthy of them*[r]; against whom it conspires, as the Jews did against the Prophet, *saying*; *let us cut him off from the Land of the Living, that his Name may be no more remembred*[s]: if they have not immediately on their Deaths the Testimony born them, which our Saviour in the same case, had on His, *Certainly this was a righteous Man*[t]; yet in Process of Time they *obtain*, as the Apostle speaks, *a good Report through Faith*[u]. Or how long soever the Piety and Virtue of any Persons may be hid and overwhelmed, yet, as He *who*

[q] Ecclus. xliv. 9, 10. [r] Heb. xi. 38. [s] Jer. xi. 19. [t] Luke xxiii. 47. [u] Heb. ii. 39.

seeth

feeth what is done *in fecret, will reward them openly* [w]: let them ever comfort themfelves, with being well affured, that if the World overlooks, or even oppreffes them for a while, it will not always do fo: for the Day is coming, of which Chrift himfelf hath faid, *Whofoever fhall confefs me before Men,* (as every one doth, that from a Principle of Confcience adheres to his Duty) *him fhall the Son of Man confefs before the Angels of God* [x]. And *then* at leaft *fhall the Righteous,* in whatever Obfcurity involved before, and by whatever Calumnies blackened, *fhine forth as the Sun in the Kingdom of their Father* [y]; *and ftand in great Boldnefs before the Face of fuch as afflicted them, and made no Account of their Labours; who efteemed their Life to be Madnefs, and their End without Honour* [z].

But *as for the Ungodly it is not fo with them* [a]: The undeferved Regard, which is too frequently paid them in their Lives; as, generally fpeaking, it muft be infincere, fo it feldom outlafts them any confiderable Time: their Profperity, that dazzled the Eyes of Man, vanifhes: the Fear or the Favour, for which they were courted, influences no longer: their Power of con-

[w] Matth. vi. 4. [x] Luke xii. 8. [y] Matth. xiii. 43.
[z] Wifd. v. 1, 4. [a] Pf. i. 5.

cealing and disguising their ill Deeds perishes with them; Things, which they hoped were for ever buried in Darkness, rise up against them; the superficial Agreeableness of slighter good Qualities, that gilded over their more important bad ones, coming now to be less tenderly handled, soon wears off, and leaves them visible in their full Deformity: all who have been injured by them, and all who have been deceived in them, give vent to their Indignation without Restraint: their very Partners in Wickedness, instead of defending or excusing them, often designedly press down their Memories under an aggravated Load of Imputations, to escape the more easily themselves; and even the Candid and Good-natured, however averse their Inclination is to it, yet from Principle give them up to the Justice of public Hate and Infamy. Thus then doth *the Name of the Wicked rot:* becomes offensive to Mankind, during all the while it lasts; and sometimes it lasts long, to be, as the Scripture calls it, a *Reproach and a Proverb, a Taunt and a Curse*[b]: then moulders away, and falls gradually into Oblivion; till the Hour come, that *they who sleep in the Dust of the Earth shall*

[b] Jer. xxiv. 9.

awake;

awake; ſome to everlaſting Life, and ſome to Shame and everlaſting Contempt [c].

You ſee therefore that God has not only declared in his holy Word, that he will reward the Good, and puniſh the Bad in the next World; but has alſo even in this ſo eſtabliſhed the Tendencies of Things that (ſuppoſing them to proceed at all in their natural Courſe) Virtue muſt at laſt be held in Eſteem, and Vice in Abhorrence. Nor will it be in the Power of unwiſe or wicked Men, though they do their worſt, to prevent this in the main. Yet ſtill in many particular Inſtances, we may if we will both by Deſign and Negligence diſappoint the Purpoſes of Heaven for the Good of Mankind. But if we apprehend it, as ſurely we muſt, to be our Duty and our Intereſt, rather to become Labourers together *with God* [d], and forward the Execution of his all-wiſe Counſels; we ſhall be diſpoſed to conſider

III. In what Manner we may beſt contribute to the due Payment of thoſe very different Regards, which belong to the Memory of the Bad and the Good. For I beg Leave, under this Head to invert the Order of the Text, and diſpatch the diſagreeable Part of the Subject firſt.

[c] Dan. xii. 2. [d] 1 Cor. iii. 9.

Now

Now here, a principal Thing to be obſerved is, that Vehemence and Bitterneſs are ſo unſuitable to the Temper of Religion, and yet we are ſo very prone to them, that whoever goes about to fix Infamy on any one whom he diſlikes, whether living or dead, ſhould faithfully examine his own Heart in the firſt Place, and ſee *what Spirit he is of*[e]. We cannot eaſily be too careful, (and it is very uncommon to be careful enough,) that neither the ſelfiſh Paſſions, of Intereſt, Envy, Reſentment, nor the Exceſs of any more generous Principle, Concern for public Good, for Virtue, for Religion itſelf, ever move us to do Injuſtice to any Man's Character: that we judge as mildly, as with Reaſon we poſſibly can; and ſpeak yet more mildly, than we judge. For there are Multitudes of Things, that may lead us into Miſtakes, by which we may be guilty of grievous and cruel Outrages againſt the Reputation of Perſons, who have done nothing amiſs, whilſt we mean perhaps only to be zealous in a good Cauſe. Nay indeed, were there no Danger of Miſtakes at all, Severity of Juſtice ill becomes Creatures, ſo liable to Faults as Men are. And Se-

[e] Luke ix. 55.

verity againſt the Memories of thoſe, who are gone to anſwer for what they have done, hath ſo peculiar an Appearance of Inhumanity, that we ſhould avoid it with double Caution; whether they have lived in or near our own Times, or in others ever ſo remote: though in the former Caſe there is an additional Conſideration to reſtrain us, that unneceſſary harſh Treatment of worthleſs Perſons deceaſed, cauſes Grief, that might well be ſpared, to their worthy Relations and Friends that ſurvive.

But ſtill, we are by no Means forbidden, after all, to expreſs a moderate and prudent Diſapprobation of bad People, either during their Lives or after their Deaths. On the contrary, due Diſtinctions ought to be made: and ſhewing the Characters of ſuch in their true Light may be extremely requiſite; ſometimes for the Juſtification of innocent Men, and often for a Warning to inconſiderate ones: that they may ſee by the Example of others, before it is too late, what Sort of Fame they muſt expect to leave behind them, if they will act contrary to their Duty: that they may not confound with real ſubſtantial Honour, thoſe empty Diſtinctions of Names and Titles, which the worſt

of Men too frequently transmit to their Posterity; nor flatter themselves that even in this undiscerning World there is any Likelihood of *one Event to the Righteous and the Wicked*[f], in Point of Reputation, whatever may happen in other Respects. And especially, where Admiration of any plausible Character will probably seduce others into wrong Conduct; there taking off the Varnish from it; and exposing it naked to View; so far as may be requisite to prevent any dangerous Mistakes, is an important Duty.

But indeed, for the most Part, the Name of the Wicked, if let alone; will rot of itself: and all that we shall need to do is, not to undertake the nauseous and fruitless Office of embalming it. To endeavour this for private Advantage; is one of the meanest and basest Subserviences to Sin. And even where Gratitude or Relation may demand from us some Regard for the Memory of wicked Men, we should however always content ourselves, with saying in their Favour what we can with Truth; and keeping Silence, as much as we are able, concerning the rest: but by no Means take it amiss, if every one else doth not keep Silence; nor

[f] Eccl. ix. 2.

expect in the least, that they, who have deserved ill upon the Whole, should be esteemed by Mankind, merely because they have deserved well of us. For by that Rule, every wicked Wretch upon Earth, in his Turn, must have a good Character inviolably preserved to him.

But let us now proceed to the pleasing Part of our Duty, the Honours that we owe to the Memory of the Just; whether they lived in former Days or within our own Knowledge.

Now the Regards due to them are briefly these; that we believe them, on proper Evidence, to be the good Persons they were in Reality; that we consider their Virtues with due Esteem, and their Imperfections with due Candour; that we vindicate their Names from unjust Imputations, and make honourable mention of them whenever a fit Opportunity offers; that we warn and arm ourselves against the Temptations, both of Prosperity and Adversity, by observing how they have gone through each; that we incite ourselves to aim at more Perfection in all Christian Graces, by seeing in them what Heights of Piety and Goodness are attainable; that we learn Watchfulness from their Falls, and a speedy and thorough Repen-

tance from their rising again; that we thank God in our Retirements for the Instructions which his Providence hath vouchsafed to us in their good Lives; and beg of him Wisdom and Strength, to *walk* as they did, *not by* the *Sight* of Things present, *but* the *Faith*[g] of Things to come.

It may be hoped, we are none of us so unhappy, as not to have had some such Acquaintance amongst the great Numbers of another Sort, with whom we seldom fail to associate. And we are doubly to blame, if neither the good Examples of ancient Days, acknowledged by all Men; nor the recent Virtues, that we have seen in our Contemporaries, some of them perhaps endeared to us by Nearness of Relation, or Ties of Friendship, can attract our Affections and engage our Imitation. Or if we have hitherto had no Opportunity of being acquainted with such Persons; yet, bad as the World is, they are still to be found in it; and all that are weak in Goodness, are especially concerned to seek them out, take Shelter under their Protection, and invigorate themselves by their Assistance. But, alas, instead of this, we attend, almost only, to such

[g] 2 Cor. v. 7.

as can promote our worldly Advantages, or favourite Amuſements; or ſuch as enjoy an uncommon Share of either: to thoſe who can ſerve us, or delight us, we attach ourſelves firmly; thoſe who excel us in any Part of the Vanity and Pride of Life, we envy: account them the only happy Men; and ſet our whole Hearts on becoming happy in the ſame Way. But ſerious, humble, ſelf-denying Worth, we either quite overlook, or view with an Eye of Scorn, at beſt of contemptuous Pity; ridicule, if not inveigh againſt, the trueſt Piety and Virtue, if it goes the leaſt beyond that Standard, which we have fixed for ourſelves, from no better Authority than Cuſtom or Inclination; and are commonly much more ſevere againſt the involuntary or imagined Failings of the beſt People, than the wilful and habitual Sins of the worſt. Thus we behave to the Good in their Lives: or if we do happen to treat them a little better then, yet inſtantly on their Deaths, we lay them aſide, and are glad to think no more of them; not even of our own Obligations to them: though perhaps we have had very particular ones, and certainly a general one of great Importance; that ſuch Per-

ſons are, as the Scripture calls them, *the Salt of the Earth*[h]: preſerve the World by their wholeſome Influence, though much too thinly ſpread over it, yet from being utterly corrupted; and ſo reſtrain and mitigate the Wrath of God, by their Prayers and Interceſſions, that he often *ſpares the City for the* ſake of the few *Righteous that are* therein[i]. Let us remember then, what Reaſon we have to honour the Good, both living and dead; and to mourn when *the Faithful fail from among the Children of Men*[k]: let us obſerve, and point out to Obſervation, the Uſefulneſs and Amiableneſs of Religion in others; and make it as uſeful and amiable in ourſelves, as we poſſibly can: being not only Admirers but *Followers alſo of them, who through Faith and Patience have inherited the Promiſes*[l]. For loving and imitating them here, will qualify us for being happy in an eternal Fellowſhip with them hereafter. And though it is a much lower Conſideration, yet it is far from a contemptible one, that by honouring the Characters of the worthy Perſons who are gone before us, we ſhall

[h] Matth. v. 13. [i] Gen. xviii. 24. [k] Pſ. xii. 1.
[l] Heb. vi. 12.

beſt

beſt ſecure that ſurviving Regard to our own, which we all deſire: and when *our Bodies are buried in Peace, our Name ſhall live*[m], and *our Memorial not depart away*[n].

[m] Ecclus. xliv. 14. [n] Ecclus. xxxix. 9.

FINIS.